The Flora of the Sacred Nativity

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THE FLORA OF THE SACRED NATIVITY

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THE FLORA OF
The Sacred Nativity

An Attempt at Collecting the Legends and Ancient Dedications of Plants connected in Popular Tradition with the Life of Our Blessed Lord from His Nativity to the Flight into Egypt:

PRECEDED BY AN ESSAY UPON

The Flora Sacra.

BY

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INTRODUCTORY

INTRODUCTORY

THE earlier the record of human thought, the more constantly evident is there a reverence for the phenomena by which man is surrounded. Job, as much as Homer, is instinct with it. The more simple and unartificial men's lives, the more present to their minds has been the sense of the close connection between the Divinity and what we sum up in the word Nature. The most ancient oracle of Greece was that introduced by the Pelasgian settlers at Dodona four thousand years ago, dedicated to Zeus, the omnipresent æther; and at that shrine the voice of the unseen deity came to men in the rustling of the leaves of its oak-trees, the song of its waters, and the melody of the birds in its groves; later on the laurel-boughed temple of Delphi was raised in honour of the Sun-god in his triumph over the wreathing exhalations of the earth; and the next famous temple in Greece was that dedicated to Demeter at Eleusis, whose story is an allegory of agricultural life. The substance of the noble address made by the Hierophant to the newly initiated at the Greater Mysteries at the last-mentioned shrine sounds like a chapter from Job. As the postulant was admitted to the inmost sanctuary and beheld the statue of the goddess, the choir sang a triumphant ode, and at its conclusion the officiant made this exhortation: 'The soul that beholds the Creator in His works is alone worthy to be admitted among His children. That Creator is not to be likened to things made of men's hands, wood and stone. He dwelleth

in no similitude of created things; space is His altar, the universe His temple. His goodness and benevolence cry aloud; His majesty and power are not left without witness. He rides on the storm, and the whirlwinds are His chariot. To you the gates of knowledge have been now thrown open; but while you contemplate the vastness of Infinity, and the mightiness of Omnipotence, learn to think humbly of yourselves; to pay your vows without grudging; and to commit your keeping into the hands of the Highest of the highest. Remember always that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and that the end of all knowledge is to teach us this, to look from Nature up to Nature's God.'

Such was the exalted tone of teaching in what some scornfully term times of heathen thought, yet to some others it would be a gratification if such thought were prevalent amongst us to-day. To every thinking person in the world's history Nature has ever been at the same time supernatural. Its external aspects even are so inscrutable and awe-inspiring, and its beauty so penetrating, that their contemplation should make the most flippant tongue silent in their presence, and often even reverent. It is not the superior knowledge of our time that makes men speak of the world around them as if it were nothing but the outcome of known physical laws, but superior superficiality. It is true that law governs the universe, for order is Heaven's first law; but to think that when we have arrived at this we have come to the conclusion of the whole matter, shows how little we realise our inquiry, and that here we have but a starting-point, not an end. Even to grasp what the universe means will always remain beyond our mental comprehension. This world alone of ours, with every element known and labelled in it, will still continue, as Mr. Carlyle remarks, 'God's creation, towards which the best attitude for us after never so much science is awe, devout prostration, and humility of soul, worship if not in words,

then in silence. When all material knowable facts shall have been gathered, we shall have, as the same author says, but a sketch of a portion of the great picture, some of the pigments, in fact, which still need the hand and mind of the artist to make them intelligible and harmonious. For the facts of the universe are the result of God's thoughts, and 'God's thoughts,' the Psalmist tells us, 'are very deep.'

The Latin word for the culture of polite life was identical with that for worship, and the term is taken from rural occupation; for men could not conceive of culture being possible without reverence, nor anything so conducive to reverence as a communing with Nature. The early Teutonic peoples had so profound a sense of the sacredness of the very soil, that we get our word earth from their goddess Hertha, with whom they identified it. The ancient Pantheisms were an abuse of even natural religion, but they were at least expressions of the heart, if not of the mind; they brought man face to face with the divine from dawn to sunset, every mountain and river had its sacred association, every grove and meadow its deity, every natural phenomenon its god. This was but man's effort to express what is innate to his best feelings; and in a like manner still to many sensitively strung minds, the voices of the universe are like a Holy Spirit breathing upon the delicately attuned instrument of the soul, producing a harmony of sweet cadenced sound that whispers of things too deep for words may be, but which need no priestess to interpret. We do not deify the natural phenomena as they did of old time; 'we do not worship in that way now; but,' we again quote Mr. Carlyle, 'is it not reckoned still a merit, a proof of what we call a "poetic nature," that we recognise how every object has a divine beauty in it; how every object still verily is a "window through which we may look into infinitude itself"? He that can discern the loveliness of things, we call him poet, painter, man of genius, gifted,

lovable'; and whether it be pagan peasant of old, or Christian king of the moyen âge, who learned a sacred lesson from flower, or bird, or star, each in his own fashion, and to the extent of his own inner light of conscience, was poet and priest in one. It was Judaism and its completion in Christianity that united head and heart together in regarding all nature as deriving its being and energies and beauty from one and the same source as man himself, sharing in varying degrees in the Fall from original perfection, 'groaning and travailing' in pain together with him awaiting the Redemption, since he was its perfection and head, he its complete expression uniting it to the divine, he its priest, the voice by which was offered the Benedicite to the Creator from every created phase of life.

The intimate belief in the constant, ever-supporting Providence of God has been the teaching of both Jewish and Christian philosophy all through the ages, and this led men to reverence every manifestation of it in every department of nature. As a specimen of mediæval philosophic thought, we may quote the words of St. Augustine in his 'City of God' (v. xi.), which Mr. Ruskin speaks of as containing all, as far as he could discern, 'that it is possible for us to know, or well for us to believe, respecting the world and its laws.' St. Augustine says: 'Wherefore the great and mighty God, He that made man a reasonable creature of soul and body, and He that did neither let him pass unpunished for his sin, nor yet excluded him from mercy; He that gave both unto good and bad, essence with the stones, power of production with the trees, senses with the beasts of the field, and understanding with the angels; He from whom is all being, beauty, form and order, number, weight and measure; He from whom all nature mean and excellent, all seeds of form, all forms of seed, all motion both of forms and seeds derive and have their being; He that gave flesh the original beauty, strength, propagation,

form and shape, health and symmetry; He that gave the unreasonable soul sense, memory, and appetite; the reasonable, besides these, phantasy, understanding, and will;—He, I say, having left neither heaven, nor earth, nor angel, nor man, no, nor the most base and contemptible creature, neither the bird's feather, nor the herb's flower, nor the tree's leaf, without the true harmony of their parts and peaceful concord of composition:—It is in no way credible that He would leave the kingdoms of men and their bondages and freedom loose and uncomprised in the laws of His eternal Providence' (Trans. Geo. Eld, 1610). In that old storehouse of mediæval tradition, the 'Legenda Aurea,' its compiler, Jacques de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa, under the heading 'De Nativitate Domini,' shows us how then they regarded all nature as related: 'There are beings,' he says, 'which exist but do not live, as the stars; which exist and live, but do not feel, as the plants; which exist, live, feel, but do not think, as the animals; which exist, live, feel, and think, but are without prescience, as man; and lastly, beings in whom all the preceding qualities are united and combined with perfect intelligence, as the angels.'

Thus did they account for that sympathy between man and nature which otherwise surely is 'one of the greatest mysteries of an ever-enlarging experience. How is it to be accounted for unless all things come from one source and are essentially related?' The green book of Nature is one of God's witnesses to Himself no less than the book of the Scriptures,—in both, deep calls to deep; the strange and inscrutable pleasure that those gifted with the power of keen perception feel in the presence of natural beauty or in the expression of the writings of the Old and New Testament is probably because both appeal to man's inner consciousness, which recognises a fellow-feeling, a family likeness and affinity with itself in the message that both these Bibles convey; it is a touching of the note that

vibrates through all, and that is its source and its end, viz. the divine life; a life which sleeps in inorganic matter, it has been said, dreams in the vegetable, wakes in the animal, but in man the child of God speaks; a life gradually unfolded to the world in the Word made matter, the Word made letter, and finally embodied in the Word made Flesh.

No wonder, then, that 'the sight of created beauty melts us, woos us, awes us, for behind the sacramental veil is the Divine Presence,' and we feel its nearness without realising its existence perhaps; but to those whose love of nature has led them thus far in their perception of its mystery, the winds and waves, birds and flowers, moon and stars, will all become sons and daughters of consolation, staying weary steps, purifying and refining each sense, and making earth's pilgrimage no sad or joyless journey, but one of constant interest and delight from Bethlehem's Hill of Frankincense to the land of the Repose.

FLORA SACRA

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Some portions of the following essay have appeared in the 'Contemporary' and other Reviews.

Flowers seem to have retained more of the fragrance of a world which dwelt around the gates of the terrestrial Paradise than anything else in creation. To be in contact with them is purifying, refining, ennobling; their simple, gentle life soothes and softens the mind fretful and feverish with the restlessness of the moiling crowd and the traffic of life's stage; and in their companionship we apprise at its true value the artificial existence of modern life, as our better nature realises that man was originally created to live in a garden, and not in a town, and that in wandering from the memory even of his old home he is working 'against the collar,' and a law of his being. If we agree with Bacon, that 'God Almighty planted a garden,' we may be very sure that He intended us to follow His example. To have been placed on this earth 'to dress and to keep it' was the divine intention; to make it a garden of delights for ourselves and our children, where the healthy proyning and stirring of the soil should produce, not only nourishable fruit for the body, but also most nourishable food for the mind—this was the design of the Creator; and until the labourer return to the land, until that political cry be true of us all in every class of life; until we alter our present reading of the sacred writings of our faith which makes us interpret those words 'to dress and to keep it' as 'to dress up our bodies and to keep up an establish-

ment'—until then we shall have a race far less 'sons of God' than 'children of Mammon.'

There was a time, even in this century, when to care for such simple things as flowers was considered, in Englishmen at least, an 'artificial affectation of singularity;' that feeling certainly no longer exists, and the modern pleasure in them in this northern latitude is probably greater than in southern lands, where Nature decks herself in robes of ever-changeful and abundant beauty; the interest we take in developing a plant to its highest degree of perfection, and producing fresh varieties of it, is greater now than in any previous time. But our sole idea connected with them is their decorative capability. There is scarcely ever any familiar or expressive significance at the root of our regard. In southern lands it is rather the reverse, the meaning or utility being the charm perhaps more than the beauty, whether it be in the language of love or as the badge of party, as the flower of a saint or the sweet store of mystic virtue. Mr. J. Bateman, in his 'Orchidaceæ of Mexico and Guatemala,' has noticed the romantic use of orchids in those countries he is writing upon. He says: 'In Mexico, where the "language of flowers" is understood by all, the Orchidaceæ seem to compose nearly the entire alphabet. Not an infant is baptized, not a marriage is celebrated, not a funeral obsequy performed at which the aid of these flowers is not called in by the sentimental natives to assist the expression of their feelings. They are offered by the devotee at the shrine of his favourite saint, by the lover at the feet of his mistress, and by the sorrowing survivor at the grave of his friend; whether, in short, on fast days or feast days, on occasions of rejoicing or in moments of distress, these flowers are sought for with an avidity which would seem to say that there was no sympathy like theirs; thus "Flor de los Santos," "Flor de Corpus," "Flor de los muertos," "Flor de Maio," "No me olvides" (or Forget-me-

not), are but a few names out of the many that might be cited to prove the high consideration in which our favourites are held in the New World.'

This same spirit prevailed as strongly in rural Europe as in Central America, to which it was conveyed, and exists still in many parts; and it is probably only since the Renaissance of the sixteenth century, with its return to the work and thought of pagan time, that this interesting use of flowers fell into abeyance. To-day flowers are employed amongst us more popularly than they ever have been at marriages and deaths, home and church festivals, and as ever welcome gifts; but this practice will die out again, it will exist only as a passing fashion, if they be used in surfeiting profusion simply as decorations in joy and tokens of sorrow, without any individual and definite and historic reason for their presence. The first adoption of any pretty custom is of itself dazzling to the mind, and, like the first gaze at an attractive picture, the eye does not get critical before it has overcome the glamour of surprise and quietly can consider the detail; the reaction takes place if in this after-thinking there is nought to justify the first impression; it is the need of authority that then is felt, not of fancy. If this be present, then each detail adds to one's original joy; it is going down to the foundations and finding them rock; it is the testing of the ore, and finding it gold; but if it be the contrary, then comes the palling of the taste, the disappointment of the heart, and the weariness to the eye.

The revival of church sentiments in this country and the renewal of a taste for flowers were almost cause and effect. As the heart of England yearned for more earnest life in its religion it threw long glances back over the arid desert of its past three hundred years; and in that retrospect those desolated shrines and ruined houses of the old faith, whose relics now stood out stark against the sky, were

seen brilliant with lights and flowers, warm with colour and incense cloud, and there was a wistfulness for the old ways, and ardent souls struggled to copy in the nineteenth century what the Church had been in the fourteenth and fifteenth. Flowers were found, as they ever are, full of pure sympathy with the human heart, and they were earliest enrolled in the service of devotion; but the old learning about them was so far away, the monastic botanist was not to be found to tell how Mother Church had sanctified all nature by setting her seal upon plant, and bird, and fish, and star, and beast, and insect, finding in one here and one there a memorial of sacred truth or saintly legend, and providing a constant source of recollection of holy things for her children as they journeyed through earth's garden.

A Sacred Flora has been the longing wish of countless persons; not only poets and religious, but antiquaries, painters, and architects have desired it. The religious that they might have their garden of the saints, whose consecrated blossoms not only might increase recollectedness by their dedications, but that the flowers employed to decorate an altar, or honour a shrine, might have of themselves an especial adaptability and meaning beyond their fellows. Artists, whether architects, sculptors, painters, or workers in textile fabrics, have required some authority for the herbage they sought to employ which would intensify their meaning and bear a congruous relation to their subject. Is there nothing, they say, to portray in the botany of sacred art save a lily, a palm, a vine, a rose, the wheat-ear, or a Passion-flower? The antiquary has need of such a guide to help him to interpret the work of earnest mediæval days when the tendency was to bring into the sanctuary the familiar things of their daily life with a symbolic intention. A discriminating writer in the 'Quarterly Review,' for July 1863, says: 'A

complete arrangement of the plants and flowers named after certain saints, or recording the festivals of the Church, so far as such plants exist, would be of great value and interest;' and that is very many years ago. Such a work, even if it had been confined to the remnants of the old dedications remaining in England alone, would have been delightful; what would it not be if it were Catholic, the voice of all Christened lands? What an interest it would be to find that a herb bore the same significance in whole groups of countries, where it existed, and perhaps in the heart of the whole world; what a new depth of meaning would reveal itself if it could be shown that this builder had allowed only 'Our Lady's flowers' to appear in the foliage he employed for her chapel, that this high altar's frieze was entwined with only such plants as told of the bitter dolour of the Cross, that that painter had carpeted the feet of his saints with a purposeful botany, or placed in the fields of Paradise a flora which spoke only of its inhabitants!

There is happily an increasing demand for such a work as we refer to, and many attempts have been made to satisfy it; but no satisfaction has attended those efforts, for they have been those of fanciful writers and their copyists. The student who undertakes such a task must not be a person who can speak lightly of names which to Christendom were, and still are, names of sweetness and veneration; if he cannot accept them for the simple earnestness of the devotion of which they tell, he need not display his lack of ability by feeble 'pleasantries,' which are revolting to even an artistic mind, not to speak of any higher form of thought. Mediæval days were marked by intense familiarity with religious truths; there was no separation between them and the daily life; they were interwoven so intimately that we with our 'Sunday religion' think they were often irreverent; and if we find

such titles as 'Our Lady's Mirrour,' 'Our Lady's Smock,' 'Our Lady's Pin-cushion,' and more toilet requisites than the poor home at Nazareth ever knew, they were names given in no disrespectful intrusion upon the life of the Virgin Mother, but in the vivid realism of a work-a-day faith.

The savant Bauhin, the greatest botanist of the sixteenth century, did not disdain to occupy himself in making the commencement of a Sacred Flora; and as far as it extended, with a success worthy of his high reputation. In 1591 he published 'De plantis a divis sanctisve nomen habentibus;' and although necessarily a very small collection, it forms a most valuable groundwork for future extension. In 1630, the Italian physician Ambrosini produced 'Panacea ex herbis quæ a sanctis denominantur concinata,' founded on Bauhin, but not extending his researches. In 1643, the pious French doctor Du Val brought out 'Historia monogramma sive pictura linearis sanctorum medicorum et medicarum,' in which is a 'Digressiuncula de plantis nomenclaturæ sanctioris,' but this again did not add anything, but aimed at explaining Bauhin's book. Between these dates and the middle of the present century there do not appear to have been any works upon the subject; and it would be satisfactory if they who then presumed to write upon it, and have since treated it, had shown any acquaintance with the above-mentioned Bauhin. They would have hesitated, perhaps, before committing to print the sacred floras which they have done, for they have been the means of misleading a large number of persons, and their catalogue of flowers of the saints have no more title to be regarded as authentic than the fanciful languages of flowers with which we are all familiar. 'In this world there are so few voices and so many echoes,' Goethe said; but upon this subject it is the faint echo of the voice of the ages of pious Christendom that we have to listen for if we desire to carry on the

tradition of their thought. It is not the ordinary reader that is to blame for accepting as sufficiently authoritative books published on the subject sometimes even by fellows of the Linnæan Society itself; but it is surprising that the writers of such books should have helped to circulate statements before seeking a reasonable authority for their assertions and without making such tests as would satisfy them thereon. But, on the contrary, these modern compilers have copied and re-copied one another, almost universally, without qualifying their assertions by the name of the author to whom they are indebted, and thus they have made themselves equally culpable in the popularising of an imposition. As a natural consequence, many have taken these lists as authentic by reason of their repetition, and produce dissertations showing how in old days they employed this and that flower and why they did so, when, perchance, the very herb they descant upon may have been introduced into Europe in this century only, and was quite unknown in the times to which they refer. With the exception of the paper in the 'Quarterly Review,' alluded to above, perhaps there is no writer on the 'Flora Sacra' who has escaped the poison of these careless teachers. Let us examine one of them, for his statements have obtained a respect from their very age and repetition which we hope to be able to destroy; and then when the ground is cleared of these forgeries and sham antiques, we may have some hope that a fairer and more solid construction may occupy its site.

In 1826, Hone commenced the weekly publication of his 'Every-Day Book,' and under January 19 he gives the following without quotation marks and without reference to his authority: 'The monks, or the observers of monkish rules, have compiled a catalogue of flowers for each day in the year, and dedicated each flower to a particular saint, on account of its flowering about the time of the saint's

festival. Such appropriations are a Floral Directory throughout the year, and will be inserted under the succeeding days.' He then gives those flowers which belong to the preceding eighteen days in January, and for the future gives one at each date. This is the first appearance of this catalogue, and there can be little doubt that it owes its conception to the pretty fancy and quaint device of one man, a certain Dr. Forster, who was writing about this time a series of interesting works upon the Kalendar, drawing attention to the natural beauties of each month and season, and illustrating the association of each day in the year by its reference to botany, history, meteorology, and so forth. He was a good pious man, a doctor of medicine, a fellow of the Linnæan, Astronomical, and other learned Societies; but although his poetic nature made him affectionate towards antiquity, he evidently did not feel that a modern invention posing as a part of the venerable past is of all things the most abhorrent to all earnest students. There is a general resemblance only between the catalogue in Hone and the flowers of the months in Forster's 'Perennial Calendar,' published two years before (1824), and his 'Pocket Encyclopædia of Natural Phenomena' in the year after (1827); but in the following year he brought out his 'Circle of the Seasons,' and in this he pretends to quote from Hone, and substantiates his statements by curious rhymes, proverbs, and verses, in every sort of language, diverting suspicion from their true authorship by appending to them authorities which have been the puzzle of bibliographers and students generally. Here are a few specimens of his statements:—

Jan. 1: 'Laurestine, *Viburnum Tinus*. . . . A familiar adage says to-day—

> "Whether the weather be snow or raine,
> We are sure to see the flower of St. Faine
> Rain comes but seldome and often snow,
> And yet this Viburnum is sure to blow."'

Jan. 2: 'Common groundsel. . . . This plant . . . is recorded to-day as the flower of St. Macarius in the "Florilegium Asp. Div."' Jan. 15: 'Ivy, *Hedera helix*, is accorded to-day in the "Florilegium" as dedicated to St. Paul the Hermit.' Feb. 1: 'The Bay is recorded to-day, and has been called the Shrub of St. Bride, but we cannot find why.' Feb. 5: 'The common wild Primrose, a plant dedicated to St. Agatha in the "Florilegium."' Mar. 18: 'Great Leopard's Bane. . . . We find in reverting to a published journal that this plant is recorded to-day by the name of Flower of St. Cyril.' Apr. 6: 'In Hone's "Every-Day Book" the Starch Hyacinthus is quoted as being called Flower of St. Sixtus.' Apr. 9: 'The Red Polyanthuses are noticed to-day in the "Floral Directory," and called Flowers of St. Mary the Penitent, why we cannot tell.' Aug. 4: 'The Harvest Bells, or St. Dominick's Bells, are, in the "Ephemeris," dedicated to the Saint of to-day.' Oct. 2: 'Friars minors' Soapwort. . . . We cannot conceive the origin of this name for the Saponaria, but finding it in a Floral Directory, quoted from some old authority, we cite it here.'

These instances, which we have not accompanied with many of their adornments, suffice to show how Forster desired to divert the suspicion of his authorship, and it only leaks out in his endeavour to diversify his supposed authority. The books which he refers to—'Anthologia Borealis et Australis,' 'Florilegium Aspirationis Divinæ,' 'Ephemeris,' etc.—have created very considerable difficulties; a long inquiry took place in 'Notes and Queries' upon the subject, in which one gentleman wrote: 'During the last year I have ransacked all the bibliographical authorities I could lay hold of, and made every inquiry after these mysterious volumes, but all in vain;' and the reason will be seen in the sequel. In 1835, Dr. Forster published in French, at Frankfort-sur-Main, a small volume, called 'Recueil des ouvrages et des pensées d'un physicien

et métaphysicien, par T. Forster,' and on p. 25 he admits that in 1825, the year previous to Hone's publication, he was at Walthamstow. 'C'est dans cette solitude que j'ai conçu l'idée de faire un calendrier perpétuel de Flora et de donner à chaque jour de l'année une dénomination d'après le moyen temps de la floraison des plants.' In the second edition, which he re-styled 'Recueil de ma vie, mes ouvrages, et mes pensées,' on p. 55, he confesses himself to be the author of all those pieces of verse to which were appended the mysterious references alluded to above. Such, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter, and it is one of the strangest literary impositions of our time, for the man who executed it was no illiterate or worthless person, but the very reverse, and his action can only be accounted for by a species of insanity. The late learned librarian of South Kensington Museum has a clear recollection of asking Dr. Forster where the authority for this Flora was to be found, and of the doctor's assuring him that it had been copied by him from a MS. at Cambridge. In later years this gentleman went up to Cambridge; but after a fruitless search in all the libraries there, and finding there was a total ignorance by the authorities of any such document, he came to the conclusion that the MS. which the doctor had copied from was one of his own construction. There can be no doubt that this is the correct solution, but we believe this to be the first time that it has been publicly exposed.

The satisfaction created to those who study the historical side of the science of botany at this conclusion must naturally be great, for here we have a definite fact. The annoyance must also be great to those who have given credit to those statements, and their influence to circulate the same; but there can be little pity for those writers who, in the patchery and sleight of modern work, have started to build upon foundations of which they

have never tested the reliability; men who do not say Hone gives this or Forster that, but who announce that 'the Catholic Church has appropriated certain flowers for certain days,' and then pretend to give them. Such blind guides have been baneful to the whole study, and reduced it from fact to fancy. The following are a few of the works which have copied Forster: In 1849, 'Flores Ecclesiæ'; in 1851, 'The Catholic Florist,' edited by Oakeley; in 1862, Miss E. Cuyler's beautiful book, 'The Church's Floral Calendar'; in 1869, W. A. Barrett's 'Flowers and Festivals'; in 1869, Ingram's 'Flora Symbolica,' *sub cap.* 'Holy Flowers'; in 1868, the Rev. Mackenzie Walcott copied many of Forster's into his 'Sacred Archæology'; in 1884, the chapters on the subject in Folkard's 'Plant Lore,' and in Friend's 'Flowers and Flower Lore'; in America, Mrs. Lincoln's 'Botany'; and, in Italy, the Countess Anna di San Giorgio's 'Catalogo Poliglotto delle Piante,' as well as countless papers in periodicals of all nations.

Notwithstanding the pleasure that it is to have a fact not a fancy for the basis of all true lasting work, we cannot but regret that we have to part with some of the dedications assigned by Forster; he has given such an old-world flavour to his pill that we can almost resign ourselves to its toleration. How delightful are his lines—

> 'The snowdrop in purest white arraie
> First rears her head on Candlemas Day.
> While Crocus hastens to the shrine
> Of primrose love at Valentine,' etc.

It is entirely constructed to suit his list of flowers, and we long for a 'reformed' text in its pretty spirit. He speaks of the *Tremella* lichen, which is found upon old walls and palings, with its bright yellow or orange colouring, as being called, 'amidst the various antient emblems of commemoration, St. Gudula's Lamp,' and the crocus he christened St. Valentine's flower, as reminding

of Hymen's torch. So, too, the flowers of the sweet coltsfoot, which come in winter, and scent our rooms, he states to be called in Italy 'Pastori di Madonna,' or Shepherds of the Madonna, in memory of those who awaited the Nativity of our Lord; but we can find, alas! no confirmation of these pleasant fancies. They are, however, specimens of the delightful environment he gave his thought, and may well excuse the deception of ordinary readers; and if we felt that there were no true dedications as pretty and as full of significance to take their place, we are not sure that we should venture to disturb their acceptance. They are so healthy in their influence, so helpful in forming a holy regard of Nature, that to the individual they can be quite harmless, and minister only to virtue; but their utility for purposes of sacred art, or their help to those who might seek to read the works of ancient days by meanings which they conveyed, was likely to be the source of lasting error.

We say that there is a *Flora pia*, not only true, but as pretty and far more extensive than any which Dr. Forster and his followers have invented or conceived. In every form of faith that has ever possessed any living influence upon men's minds, we may find abundant examples of how human nature has especially turned to trees and flowers to assist in the expression of the deepest emotions of which it was capable. Christianity is no exception; but, strangely enough, this is quite an unrecognised fact. We have only to take up the Dialect Society's publication of 'English Plant Names,' by Messrs. Britten & Holland, to see how large a number of sacred dedications prevail in this island alone; and if we extend our researches to other countries, we shall find how frequently the same dedication will hold its place in the peasant lore of every land where the same plant is to be found. It is surprising to learn how vast and beautiful a Christian flora really

exists. The life of our Blessed Lord may be found recalled therein by many a simile or type in almost every known event. We might plant our gardens with trees, shrubs, and herbs that would speak to us as they did to our pious forefathers through the circling seasons of the year, reminding us of the Saviour's Nativity, Circumcision, Adoration by the star-led Magi, the Flight from the murderous Herod into Egypt, and the Repose there. Still further, we may follow every step of His Passion from Gethsemane to Calvary, His Resurrection and Ascension, while the flora of Whitsuntide, Trinity, and Corpus Christi complete the teaching of the Church's year. The flora relating to the holy Mother St. Mary is another extensive section in these sacred dedications; and in it every type and symbol, every detail of her life in connection with her share in the work of man's Redemption, memorials of the days at Bethlehem and Nazareth, and much else, may be found existing so as to form the story of Our Lady among the Flowers. The flora of the saints is a still further division, and one of singularly vivid and historic interest, ranging from the *Via infiorata* of St. John to the single herb that recalls some only locally remembered St. Kadoc or St. Albuin.

This is the delightful store that has been lying scattered throughout Christendom, full of the most lovely and tender teaching, and radiant with faith and poetic beauty; existing often for centuries in the folk-lore of quiet country places, yet hitherto ungathered; attracting only casually the notice of the public when an individual example was brought into prominence, and again relapsing into disregard or forgetfulness. It is this story of the flowers that we hope to unfold and to save from oblivion for all who care for Christian art and poetry.

It will be asked when did these dedications originate, and the answer no doubt is that they were the gradual growth

of time. A constant remark that one sees upon such of the Christian flora as is known is that it is but a servile translation of the pagan dedications, wherein Jupiter has been replaced by God, Apollo by Christ, and Venus by Mary. As far as the present writer is able to speak, that is quite untrue as a general or usual case. Occasionally it does occur. In the instances so often quoted of herbs dedicated to Venus or Freya, bearing the Blessed Virgin's name, there is no necessity for the supplanting to have been deliberate and intentional, since in so large a flora as that which bears the name of Mary—over two hundred varieties at least—many must be included which once bore that of Venus; but it is quite impossible to show that, on the other hand, a large or even appreciable proportion of these two hundred ever bore the name of the goddess. Nor is it provable, even excluding these instances, that the similarity extends further. Moreover, it would make no variant in the regard with which Christians would take these dedications to find that the affection of a less perfect faith had cherished them under similar forms of thought; to us all effort to express devotion in associating it with the wonders and beauties of the natural world has been but the signs of the yearnings of man's heart after a revelation which to us is known. A Venus or an Aphrodite may have been the highest ideal the mind of Greece and Rome could form of female perfection; but to us such types become noisome and impossible when we compare them to her who was 'sweet Mother, sweet Maid'; a Jupiter or a Zeus may have been the embodiment of their conceptions of the King of heaven and earth; but to us omnipotence and omniscience have only the command of our dread, and make no appeal to our reverence when dissociated from perfect purity, justice, truth, and love. There was, doubtless, such a revulsion from the pagan deifications of the aspects and harmonies of nature, that for

centuries men's minds would think it a mark of the old heathenry to connect their newly learned doctrines with them, nor would they become sufficiently habituated to the lofty teachings of Christianity for some generations to allow of their familiarising their thoughts with the simple things of their daily life, and it is probable that not before the old pagan associations had died out in all conscious reference did the new ones arise. However this may be, the inquiry still remains, How did these Christian dedications originate?

To speak, as writers often do, of the 'Catholic Church having provided a flora for each day of the year dedicated to a particular saint' is quite inaccurate; such things do not belong to the domain of faith or discipline. The Christian flora has been the gradual growth of the ages, the offspring of pious thought among pious people, and arose in many ways. Many of the dedications must be of venerable antiquity, since to gain the hold they have in the familiar and old-world thought of a people is the result of centuries of quiet observance; those that we find existing among Gaelic-speaking people must be very early examples; while we may see the same spirit continuing to exist in the sixteenth century Passion-flower, and the probably still later Calvary clover. It would seem very likely that the majority were the result of the influence of the seraphic St. Francis and his followers in drawing men's attention to the world of nature about them. Every one knows how that great saint loved to unite with him the natural creation in adoring the Creator; and we can trace this spirit of the times in its architecture, where we see an awakening to natural beauty as distinct from classic formalism and artificiality, and a seeking for motive and inspiration in the growth of trees and the joyous beauty of the field. The introduction about this time of such representations in the churches as that of the Bethlehem

Crib, and the performance of mystery-plays bearing upon the life of our Lord or of His saints, not only made the minds of the masses of the people singularly intimate with every detail in sacred history, but probably led to their seeking to find some special suitability in any vegetation they might have to employ, and to recall in their work in the forest and field the images raised in their minds by the scenes they had beheld thus vividly portrayed. But even earlier than St. Francis there had been the use made by the Church in its ceremonies of various greenery, such as the palm or its substitutes, the hyssop for the Aspergillum, flowers for the decorating of altars and the honouring of various festivals, and the like. There was also the desire to identify the trees and shrubs mentioned in the Bible, or to find their counterpart in the local flora, and to illustrate the similes employed in the offices of the Church, such as the Tree of Jesse or the Burning Bush, by familiar types.

There are many other motives that originated these sacred dedications. The plant, shrub, or tree may have been connected with some event in the life of our Lord, as the Crown of Thorns or the Tree of the Cross; or with one who was subsequently canonised, such as St. Francis's rose-bush or St. Patrick's shamrock. Other examples of this class can be easily collected. The *Hypericum perforatum*, generally known as St. John's Wort, was among the Gaels of Ireland and Scotland better known as St. Columba's Wort, *Beach nuadh Columcille*, or *Lus Chelum cille*, from the Apostle of Iona having shown an especial love for it on account of its dedication to his beloved St. John, and hence it gained its second name, or was spoken of as 'the herb which St. Columb carried.' The magician of the North makes Meg Merrilies sing St. Colne's charm—

'Trefoil, Vervain, John's Wort, Dill,
Hinder witches of their will.'

Again the rose *Dorothée* tells of those early days of martyrdom when St. Dorothy was being led from the prætorium to execution for the faithful love she had there expressed of a heavenly spouse, and where an advocate mockingly said as she passed by, 'Send me some of your husband's fruit and roses from his Paradise; will you, Dorothy?' The legend continues that she knelt to commend her soul to its Giver; and asked that, if possible, some token might be sent to convince the poor citizens that her faith was no fancy, and her trust not misplaced, and as she opened her eyes a beauteous boy stood by her with apples and roses in his hands, which, gratefully acknowledging, she bade him bear to Theophilus, and to tell him that his last request she now fulfilled. A very similar name arises from the legend attached to St. Elizabeth of Hungary in connection with the same flower, and the country about the steep and stony Wartburg is a blush of her roses in memory of her still. But there are many examples of this class, and we pass on to a further reason why the names have become allied to certain flowers.

Plants were mainly regarded as medicinal by the botanists of even the sixteenth century. Brunfels, Fuchs, Mattioli, and Bock were authors of herbals which deal mainly with 'simples' (*simplicia*), as those ingredients of the leach's compounds were called; and in the descriptions of herbs from Fuchs and Bock to Bauhin the flower and fruit were most strikingly neglected. The monastery gardens were arranged with the same idea of being the druggist's store, and beyond a very few exceptions which were employed in the culinary department, the main body of herbs belonged to the pharmacy. The old lore which gathered around these apothecary beds is the more difficult to gather since it was mainly traditional and orally learned and conveyed, but to many a plant a name was assigned from its being remedially employed in a complaint in con-

nection with which the saint may have gained a notoriety for having tended or been especially interested in during his life on earth, and in which that interest was not thought to be severed now that he was in a higher state of existence. The St. Anthony worts got their names from being palliatives in erysipelas, for which the saint was besought as intercessor; the lovely cross gentian known as St. Ladislas' herb is so known from that saintly monarch having had it pointed out to him in the providence of God when his people were decimated by pestilence; and the Carline thistle is called after the great emperor, Charlemagne, to whom it was revealed by an angel when his army was dying of a plague.

Again, there is the great section of plants which get their sacred dedications from flowering about the festival of the saint or the season commemorated; and of this large class we may recall the Candlemas bells, the Lent lilies, most of the SS. Peter, John, Joseph, or Mary worts, and, in fact, the majority of those popularly known.

Finally, there are those which are distinguished by certain titles, from recalling to pious eyes by their form or markings something of sacred story in familiar knowledge, and this is a large and interesting division. Instances are the amaranth, whose purple tail-like flower may well be thought to resemble a blood-stained scourge, and whose name in Southern Europe of 'The Scourge of our Blessed Lord' gives a very deep solemnity and freshness of meaning to our English 'Love lies a-bleeding'; so, too, the Meadow Lychnis or Ragged Robin has obtained the title of the 'Flower of the Blessed Sacrament,' the flower recalling the rayed monstrance with crystal centre so familiar to the eyes of Catholic peoples. The Passion-flower since its discovery by the Spanish missionaries in the sixteenth century has been regarded as a compendium

of the Passion; and the Holy or Holly-tree continues the ancient type of the Burning Bush.

In this study we often meet with dedications of quite local use, confined to quite limited areas, but full of interesting lore when we trace out their reference; the St. Albuin's Apple of the Austrian Tirol is one of these, whose story is told in Miss R. H. Busk's pretty book upon that district; so, too, the Fiore di Santa Fina at San Gemigniano in Tuscany; St. Peter Martyr's Palm, or our own St. Winifrid's Moss and Betony. It is often puzzling to know to whom some names refer; who, for example, is the 'Sans Pons' of the Balearic Isles, whose *Rameil* is the *Helichrysmum Lamarkij*? and does the Sa Wals log of Denmark refer to a St. Walter, Wullia, Walston, or whom?

Such, then, seem to be the leading motives that have led to the creation of the Flora sacra, and there can be no dispute as to the utility, authority, and value, that it should possess for all ecclesiastical artists who care for the traditional lore of the Church, as also for private individuals who would wish for their gardens to speak to them of holy things. There is such a sacredness always about all nature, and perhaps it is especially felt with regard to flowers by most of us. Their beauty, freshness, simplicity, their remarkable power to afford solace in sorrow, sympathy in joy, and their companionship to elevate, chasten, and refine the character,—all would suggest the higher lines of thought in connection with them. Even in nomenclature alone the gain would be great if we adopted again the sacred titles. As for learning the scientific names, they are daily becoming more impossible to pronounce and more worthless of recollection, and they have raised a barrier against the study of botany by the very hopelessness of their confused jargon. What lesson is there worth the learning in such names as *Lightfootia*, *Lapeyrousia*, *Hedwigia*, *Schkuhria*, *or Scheuchzeria?* Who

would feel invited to identify, far less to touch or smell, a *Splanchnomyces*, *Tetragonotheca*, *Xysmalobium*, *Zuccagnia*, *Schivereckia*, *Pogogyne*, *Helmenthostachys*, *Chamaemespilus*, or *Ampelosecyos?* Can any rational being, not corrupted by this century's idolatry of the word Science, think that wisdom is justified in such children as these? The modern school of botanists have had the naming of the whole of the Orchidaceæ, and here is a specimen at random of what they propose for our ears to be racked with and our heads to remember, even to read them through without injury to one's teeth is a warranty to their firmness! *Wullschlaegelia aphylla*, *Physurus brachyrrhynchus*, *Warczie-wiczella*, *Tetragamestrus isochiloides*, *Telipogon klotzscheanus*, *Restrepia erythroxantha*, *Pleurothallis kefersteiniana*, *Maxillaria notylioglossa*, *Conopsis utricularioides*, *Elleanthus arpophyllo-stachys*, *Cranichis mnecosa!*

Even among our trivial vernacular names too we might show greater selection. How far preferable to such silly titles as Bear's Breach, Dog's or Sheep's Tails, and the like, are those which bear some interest in them, such as Tea of Europe, Lambkill, Loosestrife, Saracen herb, Dane's blood, and so forth; or the poetical Queen of the Meadows, Amourette, Floramour, Eglantine, Asphodel, etc., names that render our language the richer for their beauty. We are, however, so conceited with our century's omniscience, we are so frantic to get a title for each plant which we can probably neither understand nor correctly pronounce, and to dance around it as an emblem of the scientific knowledge of the day, that the name that was familiar and loved for centuries, and taught even in its sound a lesson of holiness, has become unknown or been rejected as unscientific or superstitious perchance. Unscientific, forsooth! What a silencer that word is! what a power it is to end all dispute as to the superiority of modern thought over everything everywhere! You may plead for your favourite herb to

retain its old title of the Tears of St. Peter or the Flower of the Magdalene, and say that those old names suggest more to your mind and soften your heart far and away beyond their Latin ones, but down come your teachers with their Nasmyth hammer—'tis unscientific to use such names, and you are doubtful of your courage thereafter to bear the laugh of the careless and the jeer of the 'learned;' and you say now, or try to remember, *Briza medium* and *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* or Shaking Grass and Bull or Ox Daisy, and endeavour, quite uselessly, to make your children perceive how infinitely inferior the old sacred name is for common everyday christened folk!

We are but reaping what the Renaissant spirit of the sixteenth century sowed: for just as we can trace a seeking for greater familiarity with the works of Nature in the earnest Christian thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as illustrated by the architecture of those times, so may we trace the spirit of revolt from Nature's models and a return to the pagan nomenclature of plants and pagan types of architecture in the terrible upheaval of the sixteenth century. An old writer, speaking of the reforming spirit of his time, says: 'In our zeal we visited the gardens and apothecaries' shops. So *Unguentum Apostolicum* was commanded to take a new name, and besides to find security for its good behaviour for the future. *Carduus benedictus Angelica*, St. John's Wort and Our Lady's Thistle, were summoned before a class, and forthwith ordered to distinguish themselves by more sanctified appellations;' and in the 'Reflections on the Growth of Heathenism among Modern Christians,' by Jones of Nayland (1776), we read how 'Botany, which in ancient times was full of the Blessed Virgin Mary and had many religious memorials affixed to it, is now as full of the heathen Venus, the Mary of our modern virtuosi. Amongst the ancient names of plants we find the *Calceolus Mariae*, *Carduus Mariae*, *Carduus*

benedictus, Our Lady's Thistle, Our Lady's Mantle, the *Alchymilla*, etc.; but modern improvements have introduced the *Speculum Veneris*, *Labrum Veneris*, Venus's Looking-Glass, Venus's Basin (the *Dipsacus*), Venus's Navelwort, Venus's Flytrap, and such like; and whereas the ancient botanists took a pleasure in honouring the memory of the Christian Saints, with the St. John's Wort, St. Peter's Wort, Herb Gerard, Herb Christopher, and many others, the modern ones, more affected to their own honour, have dedicated several newly discovered genera of plants to one another, of which the Hottonia, the Sibthorpia, are instances, with many others, so numerous and familiar to men of science, that they need not be specified.'

We have now arrived at a time when it is the *odium scientiae* rather than the *odium theologicum* that disturbs the quiet thought of people upon Christian subjects; and it is regretfully true that if we had here recorded the pagan dedications of plants, they would be more popularly acceptable than the Christian ones. Doubtless both should interest us, but in very different ways; one might amuse our fancy and the other instruct and inspire our lives. During the last century and early in this, several large and elaborate works appeared recording the old pagan dedications of the trees and herbs; and we might form our classic garden, in which every plant should tell the tale of pre-Christian thought, from the grass of Olympus or of Parnassus to the flowers of the gods and goddesses and heroes who pressed them. But surely the lives of our Lord and of the heroes of true civilisation, whom His teaching and example have inspired, are more worthy our recalling to mind than those old myths of the poets, even if they did enfold physical truths in their hieroglyphic form. The more we study the pioneers of Christian culture, the more do we find that they were men who were engaged in the life of their day, raising it, purifying its ideals, and rebuking its vice, and we cannot

ignore their influence if we would judge aright the progress of our race. We hear ignorance speak of them as if they had been only recluses removed away from the haunts and toil of the world, useless to their time, and gaining a false reputation by their eccentricities. But such is certainly not true, rather they were as a rule men who, in their day, were judged leaders of thought, teachers of righteousness, benefactors to their time, and sacrificers of self, and we are the inheritors of the intellectual discipline they produced in eradicating pagan habituations and refining crude conceptions.

It does, therefore, seem surprising that men should have shown themselves anxious to disconnect this old piety of association with flowers where it has existed, but so it is. Take, for example, Skinner in his 'Etymologicon' (1671), he is loath to admit that the herb *Angelica Archangelica* takes its name from what it most obviously does; the Herb Christopher, he thinks, may be so called from a doctor of that name who cultivated it for its beauty! And yet this is the wildest guesswork, which a reference to Bauhin, nearly a century earlier, or the habit of the rest of Europe, would have shown to be worthless. St. James's Wort is 'perhaps named,' he says, from a discoverer of that name, although he is forced to admit that it is in blossom at the saint's season; he can make apparently no excuse for the St. John and St. Joseph's Worts, but all 'Our Lady's' are made 'Ladies,' and he will even translate the *Sigillum Beatae Mariae* into Ladies' Seal. So, too, with a more recent writer (1879), Dr. Prior; what can induce him to say that the *Clematis Vitalba*, the Virgin's Bower, is so named as 'fitting to be a bower for maidens, and with allusion, perhaps, to Queen Elizabeth, but not, as we might be tempted to imagine, to the Virgin Mary'? We are not only tempted to imagine it, but we are absolutely certain that there is no thought of Elizabeth or of maidens, but of her

who is known as *the* Virgin. *Berceau de la Vierge* and *Cheveux de la Vierge*—its names throughout France—are not doubtful in their allusion any more than another which is found in that land and Belgium, viz. *Barbe au bon Dieu*, and the silvery plume of its seeds in autumn suggests the latter title perchance as much as the flowering of the pretty climber about the Assumption does the former. The same writer's derivation of Marygold from Anglo-Saxon Meargealla, or Marshgold, may or may not be true; but it should be noted that *Lus Mairi* is its Gaelic and *Marienbloem* is its German vernacular, and there is an extensive enough flora bearing the Virgin Mother's name to make one hesitate before seeking after strained possibilities elsewhere. It is no question of private opinion which should influence the student in this study; to gain the truth is the sole end, and no perversion of that can stand; it is quite and absolutely useless to endeavour to diminish or ignore the share of affectionate devotion paid in the ages past, as in Catholic countries to-day, to the Blessed Virgin; and no perversion of Our Lady's Mantle into Ladies' Mantle, or Virgin's Bower into Queen Elizabeth's Bower, helps to the right understanding of the subject.

The more one studies traditional customs and names, the more convinced does one become of the probability, where doubt exists, that religion is the basis whence they sprang. There are a large number of folk-names for flowers which seem to have a possibly sacred dedication, but for which no confirmation has been found as yet, and until that be adduced they must continue only doubtful; but if their origin ever be found, it is almost certain to show that the title originated in the most sacred feelings of the people.

Just as there are writers who endeavour to eliminate Christianity from its influence in ancient tradition, so there are others who will impose upon us by making it the author in all doubtful questions. One such error is the connecting

of the Ambrose herb with the saint of that name: 'Quia a Sto. Ambrosio a superstitioso vulgo sacra' was Skinner's suggestion, the name being, however, more probably derived from the classic ambrosia than from the doctor of the Church. Again, we see repeatedly that Fair Maids of February is a name of the Snowdrops, from an old custom of the maidens taking the statue of the Blessed Virgin from above her altar, and strewing the place with these flowers. Such a custom has never existed, and the name in this form is of quite modern invention, as is also Prior's one of Purification Flower. Its old name refers, however, to that feast, and in France and Denmark, and upon our own Cotswolds, it is often still the pretty Candlemas Bell.

These, then, are types of error into which all writers upon sacred botany have fallen; the careless will copy from a Forster or his adapters; the so-called scientific will set himself to explain a Mary by *mear*, a marsh; a Lucy by *lux*, the light; or a Clara by *clarus*, bright; or to account for a John, a Christopher, or a James by suggesting possible cultivators; and amidst so much guesswork the student becomes hopeless of there being any true guide to trust. Surely, if the subject be worthy of all the attention that has been paid to it, it would be well to make the study earnestly, and not to regard it as the playground of fancy. Happily there has arisen a school of scholars who are setting a value upon every form of expression which human nature has given vent to in its homely life, and which very justly judges that those forms are indicative of the minds of the great mass of the people when those forms were in vogue, and in collecting the evidences of this expression are showing the kinship of the human race and the development of man's conceptions. To them we may look in the future for such assistance and consideration as will enable us to obtain material for a perfected guide upon the subject of the Christian Botany.

For those artists who consecrate their talents to ecclesiastical work some such collection has been sorely wanting, for nothing can be more sterile than the resources for floral symbolic work in modern Church art. Beyond the vine, wheat, rose, lily, and Passion-flower there is no variety to be met with in sculpture, painting, or embroidery, and yet among flowers and birds there is a great store of material offering its aid, symbolic as all religious art should be, full of teaching to its minutest point, and bringing into design a wealth of instruction, delight, poetry, and human interest. Not only among flowers should this quest be undertaken, but also throughout the fauna likewise, for it needs only a limited knowledge of the old-world lore to show how much we miss in the depth and intensity of meaning that mediæval art was intended to convey—to say nothing of the interest that we lose in our observation of nature itself—by our ignorance of what simple things were to simple minds in the days of piety and prayer.

Why should we be subject to this famishment in a land of plenty, when a little stirring and proyning in the vineyard of the traditions of Holy Church will produce so much nourishable fruit? Symbolism is the language of the graphic arts, and tradition is its authority; although it has ceased to be vernacular, yet it is not so dead in ecclesiastical art as to be incapable of revival on a far more intellectual basis than has hitherto been possible. Symbolism is but the 'setting forth of a great truth by an imperfect or inferior sign,' and if natural history be the means employed, would not our churches once again 'smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia' in the sweet fragrance of their instruction and inspiration? The lifelessness of good modern ecclesiastical work is probably more in its lack of poetry and imagination than anything else. The thought of the day is patently drawing closer to mediæval ideals, and the principles of its life and the preciousness and consistency of its faith are daily more

recognised. The Christian flora was the creation of the vivid belief of those times, and has existed ever since, speaking in a language that no tyrant could silence, and with a potency that indifference and callousness alone can render helpless. The deeper religious life becomes, the more it will resort to symbolism; and the deeper the affection of an artist for Nature, the more sincere will become his work, and the more he will seek to express his affection in illustrations gathered in her realm.

The field of Nature is so wide that the student may have reasonably contended that he was unable to select one plant more than another as consecrated to Christian uses and subjects. There are, however, such to be found illustrative of every doctrine of the faith, and the interpretation is that of many generations of Christened souls whose eyes now gaze on the flowers of Heaven, and their dedication, like the canonisation of many a saint in the Kalendar, by popular acclaim and recognition.

Again, there is no excuse for a modern artist to confine himself to the narrow information of a mediæval one upon natural objects, knowledge then was so local, comparatively; but in these days, when the means of intercommunication have made continents like to countries then, and when there is little that has been thought, or is thought, in one place that is not easily learned in all others, there is no reason why the symbolic teaching in nature of any Christian land should not be used and known in all others. Moreover, there can be no question as to its being incumbent upon those who are desirous of making the spirit of the art of mediæval time the principle of modern work, that they should show the mark of their time not only in adapting that art to modern requirements, but also in employing for decoration, subjects which satisfy and feed the mental demand created by the popular extension of education among all classes, and which the accumulation

of literature from every country at our doors renders accessible to all students. Church art will then once again become vital and contemporaneous when, not producing copies of bygone ages, it gives voice to the thought of the day and the nobler tastes of its children. The principles of mediæval work are eternally true, but their application varies with the varying generations of human life. In the greater use of natural detail we shall but reproduce the universal taste of this present time in its keen appreciation of floral and animal life, and for the ecclesiastical designer there is a sacred fauna no less than a sacred botany from which to draw his illustrations. In his power it lies to elevate these tastes of his time, as it is seemly all the work of the sanctuary should tend to do; every detail employed will not only attract the superficial observer, but to the thoughtful it will be a voice uniting in the chorus of meaning which it will have been the artist's effort to evoke. To every true artist there must be the ardent love of natural life in every form, so that, like the Countess Matilda on the banks of the Lethe, he finds in the Psalmist's words the expression of the joy of his heart in earth's meadow sweet fields—'Quia delectasti me, Domine, in factura Tua, et in operibus manuum Tuarum exultabo.'

As a people we can largely regain that old spirit of regarding Nature as a holy thing; we are not less attached to natural history in its manifold aspects than our forefathers, but we study subjects so much more for their systems than for their facts. The systems are but the bare frames, the skeletons of the subject, and only of real importance to the specialist, whereas the education begins in all that lies apart from them. The attention which we would ask to be bestowed upon the sacred associations and the virtues of herbs is one which is ignored by modern botanical writers; but it is that which was popularly bestowed by the wise in heart of mediæval times, and

which we must learn if we would read their work, or share their spirit.

It is not, however, for the future of religious Art alone that we would venture to urge the study of the sacred associations connected with the natural creation, for the moral philosophy of the herbs of the field has a value far higher and more personal. When once we have familiarised our minds to regard Nature as we regard, let us say, an exquisite piece of ecclesiastical architecture, where we listen to the lore that gathers about each detail, and makes the whole so fruitful of inspiring thought, reposeful charm, and instructive fact; when we have learned to make Nature's cathedral aisles as voiceful as those reared by man, then those who care for the one study will be helped and ravished by that of the other. If the work of the human architect be worth our study, if we would read his thought in his work, appreciate the beauty he has unfolded to our eyes, and mark his clever adapting of material to uses and contrivances to needs, how far greater a reward awaits us in the study of the plans of the Divine Architect; for Nature is but 'God's foreman,' as an old botanist remarks, carrying out the designs of One from whom springs 'all being, beauty, form and order, number, weight, and measure.'

It is not therefore only as a study in Christian art that we shall find the sacred botany most helpful; few have to do with gardening who do not learn that it has a powerful moral influence on the character; and if we go among the herbs and shrubs ready to recognise emblem, type, and teaching such as appealed to those of old time, we shall learn that our gardens may be very Paradises of contemplation, peopled with memorials of Heaven's citizens, and calling forth in their cultivation that triple interest of body, mind, and soul which produces the only perfect and lasting delight. A return to country homes and rural life seems to us a necessity for those who would realise their triple

powers of happiness; there they may learn to love simplicity, peace, contentment, nature, art, true beauty, God and His saints. The cultivation of man's æsthetic, or perceiving, senses of what is beautiful is best pursued out of doors. Heaven is there under his feet as well as over his head. The study and watchful interest in all natural phenomena will create not only amazement at the marvellous laboratory of energy that exists, and delight in the diapason of sweet harmonies that pervades created things, but will also produce a singularly useful calm of mind and enjoyment of living, so that the words of the Psalmist are very beautifully true: 'Auditam faciet Dominus gloriam Vocis Suae in laetitia cordis vestri'—'The Lord will make the glory of His voice to be heard in the joyfulness of your heart.' For us in this world of types and shadows, or of enigma, as St. Paul calls our life, we shall find if we will listen to the lessons taught us in the mediæval lore of flowers and trees, that it will raise our minds from earth to heaven, from interest to faith, from the shadow to the truth. If it be true that 'to win the secret of a plain weed's heart' gives the winner a clue to the hidden things of the spiritual life, then we have mines of wisdom pleading for our study on every wayside; and when once we have peopled our gardens with the flowers of sacred association, then they will come forth to meet us with fresh inspirations until going amongst them will seem like Dante's description of the citizen returning to his true home. 'As he who returns from a long journey even before he enters the gates of his city is met by his fellow-citizens, so the citizens of the eternal life come forth to meet the noble soul, and this because of its good deeds and meditations. So that being already dedicated to God and abstracted from worldly things, it seems to see those whom it believes are with Him' (*Conv.* iv. 28, etc.).

If such things be true and possible, to how wide a circle

should this sacred flora be known, when we think of those who care for gardening as a recreation? Every finer nature is appreciative of trees and flowers, in man no less than woman. We can scarcely picture in our minds the idea of a home without flowers, and the home is woman's empire; flowers should ever surround her throne, and the most fitting setting that our minds can give a noble woman is perhaps in a garden, or among the flowers to which her grace and beauty are so continually compared. This is a purely Christian ideal; it is not Greek or Roman, far less Buddhist or Mohammedan. It is a feeling now so engrained in our nature that we are apt to forget that it is of divine origin; for God made woman of finer material than man, not of the dust of the earth, but of vitalised flesh, and her birthplace was within, not without, the Garden of Delights itself. She was not brought there like Adam; it was her original home. The Creator's plan for man's existence on this earth was not to dig for its gold and play with its counters, but to be occupied mentally and physically as a gardener; and it was perhaps not without purposeful intent that the Marys at the sepulchre of the second Adam were to mistake the risen Saviour in the character of the first.

The philosophy of herbs is most singularly worthy of the regard of all who have to do with the formation of the minds of the young. Childhood has an inherent delight in flowers, birds, and animals; too often we dull this youthful interest by endeavouring to make the pure gaze of those early years see things with the eyes of the materialist; and the young heart finding that its pleasure-ground is being covered with a sagene which impedes its sweet wantonness of choosing what its instincts prompt, and finding the hard breath of science is bleaching all the bright blossoms into skeletons, retreats for ever from fields of amaranthine enjoyment and seeks fresh interests elsewhere. We do not mean that if the disposition in later

years shows the desire to pursue the graceful study of botany that then there should be no scientific course of teaching, as we know it; but rather that the same method should be adopted as we would have in the study of history, first attracting the mind with its fascinating facts, and, as years go on and the brain becomes stronger, fitting these facts into their proper position, leaving for still later life the scientific method of investigation if time and tastes consent. The anatomy of plant, or bird, or animal, is no help in the formation of the plastic dispositions of the young; but the early impressions made by the hearing of how eyes long closed have loved to regard the wonders of creation without the need of telescope or microscope or knife, and the learning of the treasures of history and legend, of virtue, and of beauty that lie garnered in the smallest of the wayside flowers, will leave their χαρακτήρ, their stamp, upon their future life. It is such studies as these that make boys become thoughtful men, such culture makes children truly pleasant plants, with stores of gracious tenderness and interest towards simple things, and with an intelligent love of the great world they move in, interests which they will hand on to generations; they would be in truth as herbs yielding their seed after its kind, and as trees yielding their fruit whose seed is in itself, of whose wholesomeness we may be as sure as of that of the third creative period of which it is said, 'God saw that it was good.'

The purer the taste for floral nature and the less vitiated it is by indulgence in only seeking to satisfy the sensuous luxury of the eye, the keener will be the appreciation and the clearer the perception of its sacredness. The humblest weed will become awe-inspiring in its marvellous evidence of the wisdom and beauty of its Maker's mind; and if the observation of these exquisite artistic specimens of the divine Craftsman be united with the

story of some person or event in sacred record, then there is added an historical interest which would prove a less abstract and esoteric attraction. All nature supplies examples of the first, but only the Christian flora of both combined; and we cannot but think that there exists a very large number of people to whom the Flora Sacra would be a new and healthy delight, and that they would desire to rear and develop to its greatest extent of beauty every plant that finds a place therein. Why should we not have our saints' gardens in which every tree, shrub, and flower was one which generations of pious folk have christened and loved? Think what a fresh interest and what healthy thoughts would be inspired by a garden whose herbs were those of sacred association to you as they were to our forefathers! If you could see in the Floramour, which we have previously mentioned, the blood-stained 'Scourge of Our Blessed Lord,' as it is still known in many lands, or 'The Discipline of the Religious,' as it is known in others, would not these titles give a deeper significance and the true meaning to the English name for the same of 'Love lies a-bleeding,' and one more touchingly beautiful than ever we dreamt of before? If the Fuchsia with its gouts of pendent scarlet were to our eyes, as they were to men of old, the 'Blood-drops of the Redeemer'; the honey-scented flower of the yellow Galium, the 'Cradle-grass' of Bethlehem; the Sundew or drosera, 'Gideon's Fleece,' the type of the Immaculate Birth of Mary's Son; or the 'Burning Bush' of Holly, another type of her constant virginity; would not your garden breathe a sweeter fragrance, and its blossoms sing a holier song with such associations as these? Would it not become indeed an Eden of Delights for the mind and soul of man to wander about, and a holy place for your children? And remember, this is no fancy, it is not the poetry of an individual's private thought; these are the titles and

associations left us by our pious ancestors, common often to all Christian Europe, and still in these super-excellent times to be heard where faith, piety, and peaceful homes are found.

So, too, in our domestic use of greenery, what an intellectual charm it adds to the pleasure of its presence if there be a reason in its use. In old time every season had its own flora appropriate to it; Christmas and Easter, Pentecost and the Assumption, all had their own boughs and flowers. We can still trace signs of this in modern days in every country, especially at the Nativity. Yet even here we have lost the use and meaning of the Rosemary boughs which once were always present, full of pious memories, and the Christmas Roses that the Shepherd Maid offered at the crib, of the Cradle grasses that formed the bed of the little Saviour, and very many others. Why do we never see St. John's worts or any of his large flora about our homes at midsummer; Michaelmas-daisies at Michaels-tyde; Stars of Bethlehem for the Epiphany and the like? And, as we write this last, we do not only mean the pretty holly stars which are placed in the windows of many a noble mansion in New York, and which is an entirely beautiful memorial, but the flowers themselves, whether the *Ornithogalum*, originally brought to Europe by the crusading knights who found it abundant about the Manger City, or the flaming *Poinsettia* which forms so striking an emblem. There is no reason why we should not make our gardens a very calendar of the seasons and of the saints of Holy Church if we wished, and not only our homes and our families, but our churches would gain in the perfume of pious thought thus engendered. What depth of reality there would be if even the flowers used at our festivals, ecclesiastic or domestic, were those of these dedicated blossoms; if those wedding-bouquets now composed of unmeaning exotics, nurtured and pam-

pered and typical only of the luxurious wantonness of the world, bore some flowers that told that 'Jesus was there and His Mother,' as at far-off Cana in Galilee; or a sprig of the 'Seven-years Love' were seen, to recall the perfect love of Jacob for Rachel.

There were once, it would appear, *Gardina Sacristæ*, or Church Gardens, as late Latin called them, for we find instances mentioned of one or two. For example, adjoining the Lady Chapel at Winchester there was one which long after the destruction of the sacristy was known as the Paradise; and again, in the will of King Henry VI. he left directions concerning a garden for the chapel of Eton College, 'which is left for to sett in certain trees and flowers, behovable and convenient for the service of the same Church' (Nichols's 'Wills of the Kings and Queens of England'). About Hamburg and other parts of Germany the peasants who possessed a garden never entered a church without a posy gathered from a corner reserved for the purpose, and in France they called such little beds 'Les Bouquets de l'Église.' In England of even thirty years ago the same spirit was seen among our own country folk, who bore to church small nosegays, which in earlier times would have been laid at the feet of Our Lady of Pity or some such favourite shrine; and much else might be said of these practices.

Perhaps once again these Church Gardens may be found about our homes, and as certainly as they are tended with mind and heart they will be found to be the creators of an entirely different and higher delight in nature than any we have hitherto enjoyed; and the petition, 'Come, south wind, and blow through my garden and let its aromatic spices flow forth,' will be a petition for graces and virtues which the lessons learned therein have inspired and fostered.

The sacredness of a garden may appear greater to some

of us after learning how full of holy lore it may be made. Many an old botanist loved to dwell upon the very natural reflection of how gardens have been consecrated by their connection with the greatest epochs in human existence. They loved to tell how in a garden it was that the first Adam fell, and how in another the second Adam endured the Agony to redeem that fall. It is not so often remarked how in a garden the Lord of Heaven and Earth was buried, and there arose again to life. It was this latter thought especially that gave rise to the Christian's care of his dead, not placing them in rocks, like the Egyptians, or on the roadsides, like the Romans, or cremating them, as the Hindoos, but making their *cemeterion*, or sleeping-place, in a garden, where green herbage and bright flowers might tell of the Saviour's tomb and the hope it brought of the resurrection morning. It was from the sacredness of the ground around where the men of old time deemed the Lord's Body still lay in the mystery of the Mass, that the space adjoining a church became called the Paradise, a name still retained in the French *parvis*, for the open court before a cathedral church, and in our English word *parvise* for the chamber above our porches, as a place where priests might pray for those who slept within the Church's garth; and in every old burial-place arose a Mount of Olivet, with the scene of the Agony, or a Calvary, with its cross to throw its shadow over the sleeping dead, as did that in far-off Jewry over the garden of the Holy Sepulchre.

We commend, then, to our readers this study of the sacred flora as a wide and inspiring field of fresh interest, a continual source of mingled instructiveness and of food for the highest thought. To the men of the moyen âge the Kalendar has been said to have been Devotion's Diary and Mirth's Manual, and we might add that Nature was its illustrated Supplement. Birds, flowers, and stars were all

enlisted to help them in the expression of their rational enjoyment in life; their bodies and souls, minds and hearts, were all united in making the completion of their happiness —not treated as separate entities—so that if the body were rejoicing, the soul should be silent. The feast was not complete without Jesus and Mary. Then the world was truly merrie when men looked to the Church and to Nature as the partners of their mirth. Carol-tyde brought with it festivities of every kind, but all prompted by the commemoration that it honoured. Nature helped, with its lessons and illustrations, to increase the mirthfulness of man, and the Burning Bush of Holly, the Jesse Tree of Mistletoe, the Christmas Roses of the Shepherd Maid, Stars of Bethlehem for the Epiphany, and many another emblem it offered to deck the churches and homes of the people. Passion-tyde and Easter came on, and again in the floral division of natural subjects emblems and types were appearing on every roadside and meadow to help man's recollected and appreciative gaze. Trinity, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, and the Assumption followed, completing those Seven Stars, the Constellation of the Church's Year, and for them all nature rendered its tribute and earth yielded its fruit. Not only were the memorials in Nature confined to the great feasts or fasts, for scattered on every side about that firmament in which shone the seven greater lights are to be found, as lesser luminaries, the saints of God whose dedications among the flowers range from a single bud to the Galaxy of Mary or the *Via picta* of the Baptist. What a new world of delight there is in this study! What a vision of peace it reveals in its intellectual, artistic, and spiritual resources! Where is the limit to the real education—the leading forth of man's mental and moral capabilities—that such garden studies would bestow, giving education in its highest, widest, and truest sense? To children with their innate love of Nature the most

profound truths in dogmatic theology, to say nothing of the most needful lessons in moral culture, can be taught with the most penetrating and lasting effect if natural symbolism be employed. The sweet purity of child-life, undimmed by the world's blight, drinks in lessons from the flowers, as the bee imbibes and assimilates their honey, and yet we scarcely ever find them so employed. Is reverence for Nature diminished, the religious truth forgotten, or the instruction wearisome when the mother points to the robin's scarlet breast or the cross-bill's twisted beak, and repeats to the eager listener what pious hearts have told as to how those badges were won? Will a child recklessly pluck or wantonly injure the *Nigella* with the dimmed Eye, or the Blood-sprinkled *Orchis*, if he know what they recalled to Christian eyes long closed? It was never so needful as it is to-day that parents should encourage such a love for Nature, and it eminently belongs to home-teaching to foster the dispositions that such teaching engenders.

'Earth 's crammed with Heaven,
And every common bush afire with God.'

ADVENT AND THE NOVENA OF THE NATIVITY

ADVENT AND THE NOVENA OF THE NATIVITY

So far away out of our ordinary modern life is all the tender poetry of pious thought and custom that prevailed in earlier days, that we can scarcely now believe that such existed among a community of which we are the descendants. At no season of the year, however, do we preserve more of the spirit of the moyen age than at that of Christmas; it is the sole national feast we retain that reminds us, although but in shadow, of what those of old time were, when religion was interwoven quite indissolubly with the daily life, and domestic observances were but the reflection of the Church's dogmas and ritual. It is true that even in what remains to us the meaning, if even it be known, of what has become habitual, or existing only as local peculiarity, is little thought of, still it is a grateful task to make the attempt to revivify these dead bones; and probably there are many who would desire to learn the interpretation that should be put upon some of our Christmas customs, and see them from the Christian standpoint that led to their existence.

It will be helpful for us first to record something of the prominence held by the festival itself; and although in the following pages we especially desire to show how the world of Nature was made to assist in the expression of the season's joy, yet we shall have to refer to many homely rites as well as to tell how tree and animal, bird and star, were

enlisted by man as sharers with him and the angels in the joy of earth for the Advent of its Redeemer; we shall also see what was the prompting thought that led to their selection and dictated their use in ecclesiastic and domestic ritual and art.

Easter and Christmas are the foremost festivals in the Christian year in connection with our Lord; for as one is the keystone of the arch of Faith, so the other is its foundation. Granting the Incarnation, the Resurrection is but a sequel, for to God death is impossible; or granting the Resurrection, then the Incarnation was that of God, for to Him alone is power over death. Both are cardinal points in the Christian belief, and as such have ever been distinguished by especial pre-eminence. Christmas Day was a Theophany, the revelation to man of his God in the flesh; and although the Incarnation followed upon the Annunciation to Mary, yet it is for the Nativity that the Church looks forward in her offices to give the expression of her gratitude for the termination of her long waiting. To make some sort of conception of what these great feasts were in days long gone, we should have had the experience of the domestic life at those seasons in quiet parts of Spain, the Austrian Tirol, Italy, Provence, or the eastern States of Europe—places where the old habit of life has been more conservatively preserved than with us, and then we should be better able to understand the spirit that prompted many habits that linger in this land of ours. Otherwise we have scarcely the power to realise what before the break-up of the sixteenth century such occasions were to a people at unity in their faith; for it was the same motive that prompted all, and moved them to its expression; the customs of one part of Christendom were those of all others, though varying in name and in detail perchance; the posadas of Spain were but the novena or nine days' preparation of the rest of the

Christian world; the pifferari of Italy and elsewhere are but our waits and carollers; the shrubs and flowers of our land employed for the feast were used with identical meaning, when not identical in kind, with those used in other lands, for human nature is much the same all the world over, and the 'consolidarity of man' was known in the universal Church long before earth's bounds were twitched by railway and telegraph lines, or men invented that frothy phrase. Even in these days of social upheaval Christmas makes the best fight to retain its distinct character, for it is connected with the associations of childhood to most of us, and these we are least ready to forego. Moreover, it is the feast of a little Child, and its two great mysteries that bring sage and suckling together are adoration at the crib of the Infant God and reverence at the feet of a Virgin Mother. We all need Christmas, the wisest, the oldest, the best no less than the worst and the most ignorant. It is a want of our hearts. Jesus Christ may be said, in the phrase of the day, to have 'discovered' the little child. Plato had nothing to say for the child; the ancients showed no reverence for childhood, since its innocency and simplicity were not qualities for which they felt especial regard. The poet looks at the child as a pretty artless thing to sing about; the painter as a graceful, lithesome figure glowing with fresh life and warm beauty; but Jesus Christ in His usual thorough way went to the germ and source of all real, happy, joyous life and beauty, and looked at the loving, responsive little heart, the cloudless eye of absolute, unquestioning trust, the tender conscience, the simplicity of life; and when He chose a little child to set as the model to the Apostolic College, He saw the heroic strength these qualities give in purity of purpose and consciousness of right doing, developing into the St. Ignatius of Antioch, a Doctor of the Church, and a Confessor of its Truth. It is regarding Christian childhood under the influence of this

spirit that we should enter into the commemoration of the Nativity festival.

A preparation for the feast has been in existence from very early ages of Christianity; an early mention of this is in a canon of a council at Saragossa in A.D. 380, forbidding the faithful to absent themselves from the Church offices during the Novena and the twelve days succeeding the feast itself, *i.e.* from December 16 to the Epiphany. The custom had no doubt existed long before, but apparently was becoming carelessly observed. In the fifth century the length of the Advent season was assimilated to that of Lent; and from its commencing about St. Martin's Day (November 11), it became known as St. Martin's Lent. The Sacramentary of Gregory the Great gives special masses for five Sundays in Advent; but about the ninth century these were reduced to four, so that in the Latin Church there is at least a thousand years' authority for the present arrangement of the season. Save in religious communities, the strict fast and abstinence that once prevailed in this season, as in Lent, have become relaxed, the Wednesdays, Fridays, and the Ember Days alone remaining enforced; and it may be remarked that just as the Mid-lent Sunday is known as *Laetare*, as if to break the stern severity of the ancient Lent, so the third Advent Sunday is *Gaudete* for the same reason. The language of the liturgy continues to regard the season as one of self-denial and expectation; and it is noteworthy that it would have men put themselves in an attitude expressive of awaiting a real and actual coming of the Saviour, as if for the first time, and to realise vividly to themselves what dark groping it was before that momentous epoch, and how the heart of the world was yearning for a Redeemer. Promises of hope recorded by prophet and seer are read; symbol and type of the Root out of Jesse and Star out of Jacob are repeated; and then on the fourth Sunday the

Church unites itself with the 'Expectation of our Lady' for the birth of the Messiah.

The month of December is said to have been known in the Keltic Church as the Holy Month, and to have shared this name with the Oriental churches, and of this title a refrain is thought to be heard in the cry of Hagmenay! Hagmenay! (Ἁγια μήνη) a cry still to be heard in the north of England and in Scotland on the days that formed the Novena of Christmas under the Old Style. The actual strict observance of the festival began at the Vespers of the 16th of the month, the opening of the nine days' preparation which was called the Novena, and this was followed by the twelve feastful days ending at Twelfth Day, or the Epiphany. These three weeks formed the Christmas Holyday time, and its conclusion was marked by the housewife and her maids returning to their spinning and weaving on the morrow of the Epiphany, and the hind resuming his labour upon the succeeding Monday. Hence it is that we have still among us such names as Plough Monday, given to the latter day, one observed still in certain parts of England by civic and rustic rites, while the maidens gave the jocular title of St. Rock or Distaff to their day from those emblems of the spinsters' toil. It may be a criticism that the date December 25 is not the actual one of our Lord's Birth, but only its commemoration, and this may possibly be true, for by some in very early times the feast was kept on January 1, but by the majority on January 6. The Copts still, we believe, observe the Nativity and the Epiphany together, and for a long time the Greeks did the same. It was these differences that induced Pope Julius I., who occupied the Papal throne between A.D. 337 and A.D. 352, to institute inquiries upon the subject. St. Chrysostom, who was nearly contemporary with him, informs us that these investigations were made very carefully and thoroughly, with the result that December 25 was

appointed. St. Chrysostom, in one of his sermons at Antioch, mentions that they in the East had only observed the 25th for the last ten years, but that in the West they had always done so.

For over ten centuries the Sunday succeeding St. Andrew's Day (November 30) has marked the commencement of the Advent season of general preparation. During this time no flesh-meat was eaten, as is still the case in Russia with the people; no marriages could then be solemnised; the joyous *Gloria in Excelsis* was silenced and awaited that of the angels upon the Holy Night for its resumption; the violet of penitence and sorrow was the colour of the season, and the music was stern and restrained; yet amid the gloom, like meteors in the sky of night were signs and portents of joy; the lessons are usually from Isaias telling of hope not only for Israelite, but for Gentile also; and the Alleluias are but once or twice interrupted, as though shafts of light from the approaching dawn fell upon the season. The early part of the month was marked by two singularly appropriate commemorations: On the 6th, came St. Nicholas' Day, the children's patron, and on the 8th the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. We are accustomed to see the latter spoken of by popular writers in England as if this were a novel doctrine or festival; but unless that term be applied to opinions and practices that were observed in the twelfth century at least, the description is inaccurate; the definition of an article of faith is a far different matter from the existence of the belief defined. In modern times this latter feast appears to have been especially chosen in place of that of St. Nicholas for the prize-day in the convent schools of girls, but formerly it was the festival of the bishop that was so observed, and it is so still on the continent of Europe. All children's customs seem endowed with something of the vigour of

their own young lives, and are very hard to kill; and in England it took three centuries of repression and various Acts of Parliament to destroy this children's festival, and even up to a century ago it might be traced in various parts of this land. Even still we can see it surviving in the utterly changed aspect of the Eton Montem Day transferred from its winter observance, and no doubt in most of our old schools and colleges there are relics to be found of the Feast of St. Nicholas. Abroad it is still regarded as the day for the stock-taking of the year's progress; in every pensionnat and college the 6th of December is looked forward to, as well as in every family, whether rich or poor, gentle or simple; for it is marked by the distribution of toys and presents for the little folk, whether they be those carefully trained in homes or the little waifs and strays of the towns. All are expectant at the 'St. Nicholas' of what the good Bishop will send his clients. A little pageant is produced for the occasion; and under the guise of the good Bishop, who so loved young children when on earth, one of the elders comes to them clad in mitre and crimson cope, with his long white beard and hair, accompanied by an attendant bearing a sack or basket. He addresses the eager crowd in words of praise and warning, each by name, as may be needful; they have been to their church that morning, and heard the Epistle ordering obedience to authority, and the Gospel of our Lord's story of the talents, and these suggest, no doubt, his discourse. He then brings forth his gifts, and amid the tiptoe excitement of the moment gives to every one his reward. Finally, a bunch of twigs is produced from the bottom of the sack, and this is handed over to the Superior to be hung up in sight of all as a note of awe to evil-doers. Upon retiring to bed after the saint's visit, it is the custom in Bavaria and elsewhere for the children to place upon their window-sills little petitions addressed 'To the dear little Christ

Child in Heaven,' for St. Nicholas to take with him upon his return thither, detailing the petitioner's especial wants; and then when the Infant Saviour comes on Christmas morning, He is sure to bring them something, if not all that they ask for. Thus were children brought up in Catholic lands, with their lives interwoven with earth and heaven, making familiar acquaintance with their celestial friends, and learning thus at Nicholastyde to prepare for the coming of the 'Liebes Cristkind' in a few weeks hence. We can trace many of our own customs for Christmas Day which the republic of childhood has retained; especially we remark that our figure of Father Christmas is that of the Bishop of Myra, and his title of Santa Klaus is the children's abbreviation of his name. Moreover, in every school, village, or wherever young people were to be found, it was also the custom to elect upon this day a children's hierarchy; and in Benedictine houses that had a large number of youthful students attached to them, the boy bishop was elected to have his court until Childermasse came round; for to old as to young Christmas was a festival on which to recognise the fact that it is not to Wisdom, Power, Age, Wealth, or Position that God gives greater audience, but to Simplicity, Trustfulness, and Innocency, and that from the mouths of those with hearts like babes and sucklings His praise was most acceptably rendered. Thus each monastic community, as typical of its subjection to the Babe of Bethlehem, chose that a little child should lead them, and by their reverence to this human type marked their submission at the foot of the cradle scene.

With the exception of this suitable break in the Advent sternness, the season continued to be pervaded with a solemnity behind which lay the sense of joyful expectancy, a solemnity deepening at the approach of the nine days of especial preparation; for, like as in a Catholic church, the whole congregation may be seen hushed in awe as the

moment impends for the priest to elevate the Sacred Host, and just as all minds are directed to one spot, and no sound is heard save an occasional prayer sighed forth with deeper intensity, so were these days a time when the thoughts of the whole community were centred upon the Holy Night, anticipating the great mystery which it saw enacted. The silence was unbroken but by the caroller's song, or the pipes of the waits. The divine offices were full of hope and prophetic promise. 'Stand still, and you shall see the wonders of the Lord,' was the note of the time as it was one of the Antiphons, and men awaited in spirit by the side of the Mother Mary in grateful awe at the coming to earth of their Creator and Redeemer. Then began to be heard those 'Great O Antiphons,' which gave voice to the yearning of the waiting Church for its Saviour, and which are still marked in our Kalendars by the initial word of the first 'O Sapientia.' In the churches and in the homes of the people were recited the prayers of the Novena, and carols and litanies were sung in memory of the nine days' wandering of Joseph and Mary from shelter to shelter on their way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Taking the direct road across the plain of Jezreel, the mountains of Samaria and Judæa, by Ginæa, Bethulia, Sichem, Lebonah, Bethel, Tel-el-Fûl, Jerusalem, and the plains of Rephaim, it would ordinarily only be a three or four days' journey, but perhaps from the condition of Mary it might have taken longer. Others think that the number nine is chosen in honour of the nine months that her Lord had sojourned in her virginal womb; but it seems likely that both these thoughts were united, and the language of the offices and the customs that sprang from them appear to indicate this. In Spain and its former colonies we see these days very definitely marked by what they call the 'Posada' Processions; the word means an inn or hostelry, and this custom is observed with a devotion and ceremonial that we seem to have entirely lost. In that land every home has

its oratory, and even the peasant his piéta, and it is the habit for families to observe alone, or with their friends, each night of the Novena. A procession is formed, with the children in front bearing the figures of Joseph and Mary, servants and master and mistress follow bearing tapers in their hand, singing the Posada litany; as they wander through the corridors and along the verandahs they knock at every portal, but there is no response to them, and the wayfarers have to abide where they can. Upon Christmas Eve the same takes place, and again the travellers from Nazareth are rudely repulsed or coldly turned away from each door at which they appeal for admission; they come at length, however, to the chapel-door, and this at last is thrown open to them upon the inmate hearing the reply that it is 'Mary the Queen of Heaven that begs a place to lay her head, the night is dark and cold, and she is a wanderer from far Galilee.' They are shown a dark corner where is a lanthorn-lit, straw-strewn stable; there they may rest, and while the final prayers are being recited, a little child with angel's wings hurries in with the Bambino in its arms, and placing it in the crib, kneels in adoration; then tapers are quickly lighted, and all sing some of those exquisite carols of welcome or of lullaby to the infant Saviour, which are so full of tender piety and poetic beauty.

As we have previously mentioned, there was the canon of the Council of Saragossa in 380, ordering the faithful to observe the Novena; but we do not know if ever it has been the custom publicly to keep these Processions, or whether they are simply the outcome of popular devotion, testifying to the familiarity of mediæval thought with the words of their Church's offices; for in the services for the Ember Days of Advent in which the Novena begins, there is distinctly prominent this memory of the going up to Judæa. The great liturgist Beleth has the note to Ember Saturday. 'This day the pilgrimages begin,' and this must refer to these

pious acts we have described, since other pilgrimages would scarcely start in the winter. The words of the chapter at Lauds on the very first Monday in Advent seem to give the starting-point of this commemoration of the leaving of Nazareth for Bethlehem's Hill: 'Venite et ascendamus in Montem Domini et ad Domum Dei Jacobi, et docebit nos Vias Suas et am bulabimus in Semitis Ejus.' It is the invitation of the Church to man to follow in spirit that journey up to the hill-country, and to trace in his thoughts those paths that the pilgrim to the Holy Land has ever loved to tread, with the words upon his lips, 'Vias Tuas, Domine, notas fac mihi: et Semitas Tuas edoce me' (Gradual 1st S. in Advent). The whole of the liturgy for the Ember Days especially is evidently constructed with not only a spiritual, but historic significance, calling upon the hearts of all to join in this Procession up to Bethlehem, the city of David, and taper in hand to come and walk in the light of the Lord, exhorting the cities to open their gates, and welcome the King of Glory and Prince of Peace, for He is nigh. The prophecy employed on the first Ember Day from Isaias reads like the pilgrims' chorus as they ascend the mountainous district of Judæa and gaze upon the heights crowned with the House of the Lord and Zion, the city of the Great King; while passing through Jerusalem they continue their way to where breaks upon the eye the distant view of the Manger City, cresting the lofty ridge of distant hills. 'Erit in novissimis diebus praeparatus mons Domus Domini in vertice montium et elevabitur super colles et fluent ad eum omnes gentes. Et ibunt populi multi et dicent: Venite et ascendamus ad Montem Domini, et ad Domum Dei Jacob, et docebit nos Vias Suas, et ambulabimus in Semitis Ejus: quia ex Zion exibit Lex, et Verbum Domini de Jerusalem. Et judicabit gentes et arguet populos multos: et conflabunt gladios suos in vomeres et lanceas suas in falces. Non levabit gens contra gentem gladium nec exercebuntur

ultra ad proelium. Domus Jacob venite, et ambulemus in Lumine Domini Dei nostri' (Isaias cap. ij.). The place of the Epistle on this day is taken by another prophecy of Isaias (cap. vij.), foretelling the tremendous mystery of the Virgin becoming a mother. 'Audite domus David. . . . Ecce Virgo concipiet et pariet Filium, et vocabitur nomen Ejus Emmanuel,' and the Gospel is of the Annunciation and the submission of Mary to the Will of God. The second day records how Mary once before had come up to this hill country bearing in her breast, as within an Ark of the Covenant, Him who was the 'Virga de Radice Jesse et Flos de Radice ejus;' and, indeed, all through these offices there is mingled the thought of the nine months' sojourn and the nine days' caravan journey. The very similes seem gathered on the road, the mountains and valleys, the crooked ways and stony tracts, the shepherds on the hills tending their sheep, the distant views of Sharon and Carmel from the hilltops, and the wilderness that the last of the prophets was to make to re-echo with his cry of 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord,' all these are to be met with. Were not these two wayfarers truly the 'Beati Immaculati in via, qui ambulant in Lege Domini,' of the Gradual on the Saturday? At least six times through the season has the petition been used in gradual, tract or introit, 'Qui regis Israel, intende: qui deducis velut ovem Joseph.' Does not the heart, as it forms the picture of Mary approaching the Holy City with the Divine Child within her Virgin's Bower, naturally exclaim, 'Jerusalem, surge et sta in excelso et vide Jucunditatem tuam quae veniet tibi a Deo tuo!' or at the entrance to Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, 'Tollite portas, principes vestras, et elevamini portae aeternales, et introibit Rex gloriae.'

We might illustrate this more fully, and all who care to closely follow the Divine liturgy appointed for this season will easily be able to recognise the source of this custom of

the Novena processions, in days when body and soul were united, and faith was joined to homely rite, to give expression to the promptings of the human heart.

Our own waits and carollers were but observers of this Novena of Christmas; it is only of recent years that any but sacred music or songs were heard from them; their very names of waits and wastlers are taken from words signifying their instrument (*wayghtes*=hautboys according to Dr. Busby in *Dictionary of Music*), and from their recalling the wanderers from Nazareth (*wastle*=to wander), in the same way as the word *Pifferari* is that for these Christmas pipers in Italy, and *Posada* for the processions in Spain. Both in France and England the carol has a very distinct place both in music and poetry, and it is a singularly beautiful expression of mirth and piety for pure-hearted, simple-minded folk. Carolling has never died out in England; and it is very much to be hoped that its revival in the churches will not be reduced to the same formal position as that of ordinary hymn-singing, but that these songs will be more cultivated for use either out of doors, in processional motion, or in the domestic circle upon visits to the cribs. In Old England there can be little doubt that, as in other Catholic lands, every home had its statue or shrine before which the Christmas waits and wastlers sang their carols and piped their music, and that the present custom of their visiting the different houses in a parish arose from this pilgrimage of piety. We may see this retained in many places in Europe, but we are best acquainted with its observance in Italy and Sicily. In the latter fair island early in December the *Cantastorie*, who are usually blind men, go from house to house taking engagements for singing the Novena; and when they come for this purpose the household shrine is decorated with orange boughs and lighted with nine candles; each night these blind waits sing their *minareddi*,

which are of great variety, the most popular being that of 'The Nine Days' Journey to Bethlehem,' accompanying their songs with fife, bagpipe, and castanets. One of the most favourite sights in Rome at Christmastyde under the old régime was the visit of the mountain shepherds of the Abruzzi to keep the Novena dei Pifferari del Santo Natale. Their thrilling music, which may be as old as the time of Romulus, and once have been played before Cybele the Syrian goddess, has frequently afforded a favourite subject to composers, and both Handel and Corelli have adopted it with trifling alterations in its notation and rhythm. So popularly acceptable were the visits of these peasants, that they had to leave their homes and begin to circulate in the villages about All Souls' Day in order to satisfy the desire of their many clients. From the Daybreak to the Evening Angelus these rough herdsmen play their simple strain upon their rustic pipes and sing their touching 'Song of the Shepherds.' Their *piffero* is a small reed or fife, and a species of bagpipe known as the *cornemusa* supplies a bass accompaniment. Hat in hand and with earnest eyes they stand before each wayside piéta, or that at each house to which they are invited, for their presence is thought to be auspicious to the home. Not as mendicants do they come, but as pilgrims, receiving in return only their needful food or shelter, for which in acknowledgment they leave behind a wooden spoon and fork manufactured by them in their mountain homes.

Thus do Calabria's shepherds testify their gratitude that to men of their calling upon Judæa's hills the angels saw fit to first announce the Saviour's birth; and our waits were perhaps originally those who followed the same occupation as these Abruzzi pifferari, and thus successors of those pastors who kept the night watch upon the Hagia Pimena or Holy Pasturage of Beit-Saour.

THE HOLY NIGHT

THE HOLY NIGHT

Advent is the remembrance not only of the coming to man of his Redeemer, but also to the House of Earth of its Creator; and recognised from this point, it needs no great effort of imagination to conceive that the whole of things created would make their endeavour to manifest their appreciation of that fact. If before that coming everything was in union with man in varying degrees of sin-dimmed life, then upon its occurrence everything would become voiceful in its own way in gratitude for the great deliverance. St. Paul says that all creation had 'travailed and groaned together, waiting for the Redemption'; and when it came, man but 'gave tongue' to the animate and inanimate creation about him, of which he was the highest expression and complement. Thus he became the leader of a wondrous choir that raised a vast chorus in its Maker's praise. Earth was made to sing with the angels in antiphonal chant; once again with fresh meaning was heard the old song of Babylon, 'Benedicite omnia opera Domini, Domino,' and earth responded with the ministry of its holy lore; flowers and foliage came to mark the feast with joyous emblems and memorials; the songs and warblings of birds became translated into songs of praise; the brute creation tendered its homage; the circling constellations of the blue vault of space were all christened so as to become eloquent of this responsiveness to the Creator, and even to every wind was the call made to bless the Lord.

To the men of old time the minor offices of the Church

were far more popularly familiar than they are now to any of us, save those in religious houses; and they would seem to have taken the concluding psalms of the daily Lauds in a very practical manner, and made the world about them partners with themselves in fulfilling their appeal:—

'Laudate Dominum de coelis, Laudate Eum in Excelsis.
Laudate Eum Sol et Luna, Laudate Eum omnes Stellae et Lumen.
Laudate Eum Coeli Coelorum, et Aquae omnes quae super coelos sunt, laudent Nomen Domini.
Laudate Dominum de terra, dracones et omnes abyssi.
Ignis, Grando, Nix, Glacies, Spiritus Procellarum, quae faciunt Verbum Ejus.
Montes et omnes Colles, Ligna fructifera, et omnes Cedri.
Bestiae et universa Pecora, Serpentes et Volucres pennatae.
Cantate Domino canticum novum.
Omnis Spiritus laudet Dominum.'

At the moment of the Sacred Birth it was supposed that there was a universal pause in nature, a profound silence pervading creation for a few moments, when the cattle ceased to feed, the night-bird paused in its flight, and the heavenly bodies danced and carolled for joy; the stable and its stall were radiant to the Christian peasant with memories of Bethlehem; the ox mindful of his Owner, and the Ass of his Master's crib, taught by an unfathomable instinct, were thought to make their obeisance at the hour of the Nativity—

'Cognovit Bos et Asinus
Quod Puer erat Dominus,'

while the humble shepherd on the hills united with himself his folded sheep in adoring Him of whose advent they were the first to be told. In our own land many remains are to be found in its folklore of this old belief of the animals' adoration upon Christmas night, and even among the converted American Indians the pretty legend has been found, and one was seen to creep stealthily to a spring at midnight to witness, as he said, the chief stag of a herd kneel in homage to the Saviour's Birth. The husbandman said that at the hour that marked the Divine Advent the

bees awoke from their winter sleep, and might be heard to utter marvellous canticles in their own method of song, but which only those free from stain of mortal sin could hear, while a language was put to the sounds of birds and animals, and to the listening ears of the pure in heart, the Cock crowed *Christus natus est* (Christ is born); the Raven croaked *Quando* (When)? the Rook cawed *Hac nocte* (This night); the Ox mooed *Ubi* (Where)? the Sheep answered *Bethlehem*; and the Ass brayed *Eamus* (Let us go). Even as early as the fourth century we may trace this giving of words to the sounds of the animals in reference to the Saviour's Birth, and the poet Prudentius has the following reference to it:—

'Vacca *Puer natus* clamabat nocte sub ipsa,
Qua Christus pura Virgine natus Homo est;
Sed, quia dicenti nunquam bene creditur uni,
Addebat facti testis asellus: *Ita*,
Dum aiebat: *Ubi*? Clamoso gutture gallus:
In *Betlem*, *Betlem* vox geminabat ovis.
Felices nimium pecudes, pecorumque magistri,
Qui norunt Dominum concelebrare Suum.'

Thus men loved to find in Nature a sense of correspondence to their own feelings; they took the classic halcyon days that come before the winter solstice, and drew from the calming of the warring seas a simile acceptable to their thought of the fitness of things, finding in this legend of the Halcyon or Kingfisher, which was said to make its nesting-place upon the waters, between the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8th) and the Nativity, a reason to christen it the 'Madonna's fowl,' which heralded the coming of the Prince of Peace. Upon St. Stephen's Day the Wren was sought to receive the priest's blessing upon its race from one of its kind having had its nest in the Bethlehem stable at the same time as the Saviour's Birth; and it is sad to think that the old tradition being forgotten or ignored, this bird is still pursued in many places upon that day but to indulge a reckless cruelty and wickedness in making him

as it were the protomartyr of God's birds. Once to men's eyes this pretty feathery ball was 'God's little fowl,' or 'Our Lady's Hen,' and, like Robin and Swallow, Kingfisher and Crossbill, its life was made sacred by the memories around it; but there came those who called all such thoughts 'superstition,' and under the blast of their breath reverence was blighted and poetic feeling has been destroyed in the hearts of our people. Let such beware of the old Scotch curse, which many will utter with earnest conviction:—

'Malisons, Malisons, mair than ten,
That harry the Lady of Heaven's hen.'

In the Tirol at the conclusion of the Midnight Mass the people break out into carol-singing, and the pious peasantry are wont to accompany the music with the imitation of the songs of the birds, so that God's choristers may not be forgotten at that silent hour of night. In many countries there has prevailed the custom among the farmers, in connection with the supposed sympathy of animals with the Nativity, of supplying their cattle and fowls with a greater abundance of food upon that day, and in Northern Europe it is said to be frequently the habit to place a sheaf of oats on the porch of the house, so that the birds may share in man's rejoicing. (Frederika Bremer has drawn a very pleasing description of this kindly custom in her novel 'Streit und Friede,' and the Swedish poet Bjerragaard has alluded to it.)

But not only was the realm of animate nature thus united with the events of the Holy Night, but the very phenomena of light and darkness and the winter glory of the stars of heaven were made emblems of great truths, and thus united by men in their rejoicing. They endeavoured to bring home to their minds with all the force of realisation, the contrast between the world with and without the Advent of the Saviour, to show that it was like the contrast

between darkness and light in the physical world, illumined by stars and the reflected light of the waning moon of the Judaic dispensation it is true, but not by the life-giving light of the Sun of Justice. Advent was the reminder of these long ages of groping in shadowy and uncertain ways permeated but by one ray of vitalising hope, that of the promised Messiah. The three masses ordained to be said on the Feast of the Nativity by Pope Thelesphorus in A.D. 127 were to be offered in gratitude to God for the salvation of souls who struggled to the light (1) before the Mosaic dispensation, (2) under it, and (3) after it, uniting in memory the three Births of our Lord (1) from all eternity of the Father, (2) into time of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and (3) in the hearts of the faithful. The great O Antiphon for the 20th was, 'O Key of David and Sceptre of the House of Israel . . . come and lead him that is bound from the prison house, and him that sitteth in darkness and in the shadow of death'; 'O Orient, Splendour of the Eternal Light, Thou Sun of Righteousness, come and illuminate us that sit in darkness and the shadow of death,' was that of the 21st; and it is beautifully interesting to trace throughout the offices of the season how, amid the anxiety of the night, there come the flashes of hopeful promise, as if to keep up the courage of despondent souls. Like beacon lights from the shore to the shipwrecked, so come to the longing Christian such assurances as, 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand'; 'Behold, the Lord shall come . . . and in that day there shall be great light'; 'Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad, for He cometh.' The darkness that fell upon Egypt and the release of its bondsmen was a favourite simile; one of the introits of the feast was that verse from the Book of Wisdom which seems written for the Midnight Mass: 'While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy Almighty Word leapt down from Heaven from Thy

royal throne as a conqueror into the world of destruction.' The words, 'At midnight I will go forth into Egypt,' were used in this mystical sense; and Our Lord's own words, 'She remembereth no more her anguish for joy that a Man is born into the world,' were continually applied in mediæval use to the long travail of the Church through the thousands of waiting years for the Advent of the Redeemer.

There must have been a singularly vivid meaning in these references to light and darkness in the early days of Christianity, since then the Vigils of great feasts were kept by the faithful actually in the churches as they continue to be done still in religious houses, and we believe by the Coptic laity and clergy. For obvious reasons this practice had to be disallowed in the progressive West; but Christmas continues to have the Matins and Lauds of the day largely indulgenced devotions in the Western Church, and the first Mass on the day is the only Midnight one that remains in the year of all of those of the ancient Vigils. If we remember this, we can the more readily appreciate the power with which passages telling of the darkness, the stars of the firmament, and the like would come to their ears, as they may still to those who live in the country; for the stars in December are especially brilliant, and the Advent season's opening hymns both at Vespers and Lauds refer to them. The beautiful 'Creator alme Siderum' and 'En clara vox redarguit,' whose lines are pregnant with meaning, must have attracted those who sang to think of the Star out of Jacob that was to arise out of the darkness of night; and just as the words recur again and again in Introit and Gradual of the season, 'Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei et opera manuum Ejus annuntiat Firmamentum,' so in the first Vespers of the feast itself they heard—

'Hunc astra, tellus, aequora,
Hunc omne quod coelo subest,
Salutis auctorem novae,
Novo salutat cantico.'

This was the new canticle that the Church would have man take his part in, and unite all Nature with him in its singing, so that from star and sea and earth should go up a great shout of rejoicing to the Author of the New Salvation. It was in the expression of this joy that in days of earnest life men christened all nature about them. Going forth into the crisp winter air, they beheld among the constellations the rising '*Praesepe*,' or Bethlehem Crib, and in Orion's band the three Magian sages hastening to adore its occupant; and in their homes Christmas Brand, and Candle, and Blazing Tree were all expressive of their faith in the advent of the True 'Light of the World.'

The Christmas night rejoicing cannot have left many hours for sleep, for upon the return home there were many rites to be observed before retiring. The fagot had then to be lighted, and subsequently the Yule log placed upon its embers, the wassail song had to be sung, and the Mary Brand or Taper kindled.

The Christmas Torch or Brand. The Christmas or Mary Taper, which was once a marked feature in our domestic ritual, and was wont to be burnt in every English home, as it is still in Ireland, is now seldom to be seen. It was a huge torch or candle usually coloured red and blue and garlanded about with greenery, lighted after the Midnight Mass, and, where possible, only ignited, snuffed, and tended by a maiden or one bearing Mary's name. It was thought that it should be given, not purchased; and hence it became the custom, and still continues in parts of the North countree, for chandlers, grocers, and the like to present them to their customers. 'At Rippon, in Yorkshire, on Christmas Eve,' says the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1750 (p. 719), 'the chandlers sent large mold candles and the coopers logs of wood, generally called Yule Clogs.' In Lapland the candle is like the Easter or Pentecost taper,

branched into three, or with divided stem each bearing three wicks. We seem to have a memory of this distinctive mark of the Christmas joy in the name of several flowers. The High Taper, for instance, or Great Mullein (*Verbascum*), is still known in Ireland as the Virgin Mary's Candle; in Gaelic it is Cuineal Mhuire, in France and Belgium Le Cierge de Notre Dame, and in Germany Marien Kerzen, Unser Frauen Heil, or Himmelbrand. Its thick leaves are called in Kent 'Our Saviour's Flannel,' as if in memory of the swaddling bands of the Christmas Night. The White Campion (*Lychnis dioica*), which gives forth its fragrance at night as if to recall the hour of the sacred Birth, is spoken of by Ruellius, in 1544, as being known by the name of 'Chandelle de Notre Dame;' but perhaps both this and our North Country 'Lady's Candlestick,' as a title for the Greater Cowslip (*Primula veris*), may more probably be referred to Candlemas Day.

The Christmas Fagot. Besides those trees and shrubs which we shall have to enumerate as marking by their greenery the presence of the Nativity festival, serving our forefathers as Kalendars of the season and illustrations of its teaching, there were others employed in their domestic rites for definite reasons. Our modern arrangement of the hearth no longer permits of our enjoying the blazing fagot which once was customary within the ample ingle nooks of Old England, nor can it be succeeded by a Yule log of the old proportions to burn through the night and following day. Both have virtually disappeared in all but name from amongst us, together with the homely ritual connected with them and the traditions they recalled. In Christian story it was the Ash that tendered its wood, though green, to burn in the Bethlehem grotto upon the first Christmas night, and by an ashwood fire the Sacred Child was washed and swaddled. Ever since the time that

this tree brightened that desolate scene, and warmed that new-born Babe, it has retained its generous power, confirmed to its race by its Creator, and when the sap of all other trees of the wood prevents their kindling, the Ash will not refuse the ministry of its consolation to benighted traveller or homeless wanderer, for the more freshly it be cut the more sprightly will be its flame. In some old homesteads in the north and west of England they yet retain the ashwood fagot tightly bound with seven or nine stout withes made of the Hazel-tree, which was thought to bring its early catkins to tell of the shelter its branches once gave to the Holy Family. These strands or withes were placed close together, and great ingenuity was exercised in making them of different degrees of size and strength, for as each one gave way, bursting with a loud report, a claim was made upon the host for the circulation of the bowl of wassail; if two snapped together, the host only allowed one draught instead of two, and hence much mirth and expectation were excited as to the rapidity with which the bands surrendered. Lighted with the remains of the last year's Mary's Brand or Candle, or, as in Brittany, with fire brought from the sanctuary lamp of the Church, the family gathered around the hearth, master and dame, hind and maid, and Melampo the shepherd-dog no doubt revelling in its blaze. It was a pleasant fancy that all mistrust and jealousy and memory of bitter words passed away in the leaping tongues of flame of the Christmas fagot. Mirth and happiness were not in old days dissociated from religion; the sacred associations allied to Ash and Hazel were the enhancement and perfection of their joy. Every act was part of a natural ritual, each old custom had its symbolic meaning, its raison d'être; the mind helped the soul, and both found expression through the body, and made the satisfaction of happiness. After the fagot was lighted, in was brought the wassail-

bowl of maplin-wood, borne by a maiden, its sides decked with fragrant sprigs of the Virgin Mother's Rose-Mary, and bound with her ribbons blue; and, to recall the Mother's breast, above it rose a cover, dome-shaped, or else a twined arbourage in the place of one, while upon the surface of the beverage floated a little Bambino or His cross. As it came into the hall, accompanied by the children, all sang the 'Wassail Song of Mary,' still to be heard perchance in some retired spots of these isles, and of which, as sung in Wales, Hone gives a rough translation in his 'Every-Day Book' (i. 1601), and then each grown-up member of the house, kneeling at the maiden's feet, takes through a straw one draught, limited to a breath, from the bowl's ingredients. Amid all this delightfully symbolic ritual there was room for the interplay of continual mirth and merriment; as each of the Hazel withes gave way a fresh toll was claimed, and from the skill with which each detail of the feast was performed many an augury was drawn. At Stevington, Bedfordshire, the scene of two kneeling figures drinking at a bowl is carved upon a bench-end in the church, and is thought to refer to this Christmas observance, while the word wassail and its songs are to be heard in every form of corruption in the midland and northern counties.

In Sicily the Buckthorn is called Zaccati Natalini, and probably they use it at Christmas because it is connected in many places with the new fire at Easter, from its being the Jewish custom to employ it at the Paschal time.

The following lines by R. T. Thorn, of Bristol, 1795, show that the customs we have alluded to above were not then obsolete in the west country:—

'The pond'rous Ashen-fagot, from the yard,
The jolly farmer to his crowded hall
Conveys with speed; where on the rising flames
(Already fed with store of massy brands)

It blazes soon; nine bandages it bears,
And, as they each disjoin (so custom wills)
A mighty jug of sparkling cyder 's brought,
With brandy mixt to elevate the guests.'

The Yule Log or Block. As soon as the soaring tongues of flame from the fagot died down, and each Hazel band had yielded to the influence of the heat, in was drawn upon a decked trolly the Yule Log, a huge block that had been dried for the occasion. It varied in material, but usually it was of Oak, Pine, Ash, or Olive; in Southern France it is known as Le Souche de Noël, Souc Nadalen, Calendau, or Trefoir de Noël; as Zocco di Natale in Tirol and in Lombardy, or Zocca di ogni bene. The Tuscans call Christmas, Yule Log Easter, and make use of an Olive block for the fire. Upon the Yule Log, adorned with paper flowers and brightly coloured ribbons, the youngest child present poured some wine, and prayed that this blessed night fire might warm the cold, the hungry might find food, wanderers gain their rest, and all might enjoy Heaven's peace. Placed upon the hot ashes, the block of wood was soon ablaze, and there it burned all through the night, 'to keep the Divine Infant from the cold,' as they say in Tirol.

The Christmas Bread. It does not belong to our study to speak of the games, fare, and other festivities that marked the season; yet we feel tempted to allude to some of these that are practically forgotten in their significance. Just as the children's game of Cratch-Cradle takes its name from their sports at this season, when Mary 'brought forth her fyrst-begotten Sonne . . . and layd Him in a cretche,' so did the form of the Cradle-Cakes tell of the same. Selden, in his 'Table-Talk,' speaks of the coffin of the Christmas pie, the prototype of our mince pie, being in shape long, in imitation of the manger, and

we find outcries in the seventeenth century against this 'Idolatrie in crust!' In Picardy and other parts of France they have cakes called *cuignets*, because 'in cuneorum varias species efformantur,' as Dufresne says, and their cross-latticed covering was to represent the rack of a stable. Cakes made in the form of the Madonna and her Son are still sold in the back streets of many towns in England, and are known as Yule-doos, dows, doughs, or cakes; or, as at St. Albans and Staines, 'Pop' or 'Pope's ladies.' On the Continent these are of endless variety of shape and quality. Christmas Eve being an abstinence day, the supper had to be maigre; furmety made of creed-wheat boiled in milk and seasoned with spices seems to have been a universal dish, but various fish appear to have been de rigueur; in Rome the cenone must be decked with a huge indigestible eel called *capitone*, in Hamburg it was carp, in Kent a St. Rumbold's whiting, and so forth. After the Midnight Mass abstinence was, of course, over, and anything could be taken. In every land hospitality rules with ungrudging hand at this time, and in Eastern Europe they say that at the moment when the Saviour was born the heavens open and Jacob's Ladder may be seen stretched to earth, and angels descending to visit men. Many folk-lore tales are told of the punishments that befall those who are not ready to help Christ in His poor upon this night; in Transylvania the master of the house, as he takes his seat at table, prays that our Lord and His Mother may visit him as they pass through the earth and bless it; he asks that

> 'This night two Guests I hope to see,
> And both I'm sure shall welcome be;
> With me I trust they'll deign to rest,
> Of all I own they'll have the best.'

In Brittany the same pious thought prevails, and in every country it was deemed the height of impiety to turn the stranger away unrelieved from the door, lest it should

be the Lord Christ Himself. It was in hopeful trust that the Great Friend might come that food was never refused to any who besought it, and it was said that wherever the crumbs of the Pain de Noël fell that there sprang up the herb we call (Our) Mother's Wort (*Leonurus cardiaca*). It is the Engeltrank of Germany, and the Manus Beatae Mariae of the early herbalists, a plant pregnant with virtues, whose young leaves are marked by the Maiden Mother's Milk, and it is one of which old Culpepper states 'there is no better herb to take melancholy vapour from the heart, to strengthen it, and make a merry, cheerful, blythe soul.'

Some of the legends of the coming of Our Lord under the form of the wayfaring man to beg the Christmas bread are singularly pretty. We have traces of them in the custom that once existed of our peasantry going to Raleigh Vale in Essex, and also at Preston, Lancashire, to listen for the bells of a subterranean church that once stood in the midst of a fair town all engulfed for its sin in not recognising the heavenly visitor. A Netherlands saga tells of a place called Been close to Zoutleeuw, now beneath the sea, which was once a stately city; but it became engrossed with commerce, indifferent to the life of the soul, and hardened in its heart to pity. Our Lord came thither one Holy Night, for the houses were bright with lights, filled with plenty, and resounding with songs of wassail and gay voices. The bells were ringing their joyous peals out to the crisp night air, and the Mary chimes were sounding clearly across the snow-covered plain from many a noble tower as the Divine Guest drew nigh. He begged from door to door, but was repelled from each. He even took the form of a little child, and in that touching guise He asked for food and shelter for the sake of Him whose birthday it was; but all were too occupied with their business, their pleasures, or their sin to listen to the wandering Boy, and He was rebuffed and shut out in the winter's cold. Every

heart had become ruthless and indifferent; no sweet pity existed even for childhood, no tender reverence for age; the music of the bells spoke to no listening heart in that wicked city; the rejoicing was not for the Saviour's Advent, nor the gaiety at His coming; its lords recognised not that they were but the stewards of His wealth, but personal luxury and indulgence, vulgar proudful display alone prevailed. Yet His was the hand that had given the rich harvests of sea and land that had enriched the town, He the King who had placed His guarding sentinels along the ocean's bourne and restrained its eager herd of waves, and yet no recognition was given of His Presence on this His birthday morning. So the great God withdrew His warding angels and sent them back to Heaven, and that night the hungring waves burst impetuously in through sandy dune and stone-heaped dyke, and the cruel town was lost so that it could pollute God's earth no more. On Christmas Eve, as the benighted fisherman of the Zuyder Zee hears those bells coming up through the waters, he hastens away from the spot in fear, and thinks of the city that 'knew not the time of its visitation.'

SOME FLOWERING TREES, ETC.

The Holy Thorn of Glastonbury.
St. Patrick's Thorn at Tours.
The Dagny Thorn.
The Oak at Cadnam.
Fruit-bearing Trees.
Some Christmas Flowering Plants.
The Rose-Mary.

SOME FLOWERING TREES, ETC.

It is around the trees and flowers that we find gathered a greater number of associations than about any other branch of natural history, for man turns to these since they lend themselves more sympathetically to the purpose of expressing the image of his emotions.

To men of earnest and simple faith it seemed no unreasonable thing to account for the action of those trees and plants which put forth their buds or blossoms at Christmas time, as doing so mindfully of their Creator, or at least by the express will of God to attract men's minds to the events of the season's commemoration. They argued that the God of Nature, the Maker and Designer and Source of it all, was coming to this earth of ours, and throughout its varied forms of life must there not have been a thrill of awe and responsive love expressed by each in its own way? His the hand that created each form of bud and leaf, painted each colour, and bestowed each fragrance; His the touch that gave the crown to the Pomegranate, the lacing to the Pink, the pencil to the Bethlehem Star or Candlemas Bell, and the blotch to the Milk Thistle or Orchis. All their beauty, all their joy came from Him; He it was who gave the feather and flame to the Tulip, the flake to the Carnation, the edging to the Picotee, or the rough dowl to the Chestnut; and here He comes to tread the meadows of earth, and at such anticipation would they not gladlier grow, and could not He whose word could wither the Fig-tree permit the sap of spring to

return to the dry stocks in winter's cold? Every land has loved to recognise amongst its vegetation instances to confirm this tender sympathy. The patristic legend of how the Vines of Engaddi burst into leaf, flower, and fruit when He who was the True Vine appeared, had been a favourite illustration, and we shall see the desire to make the blossoming of plants and the ripening of various fruits do honour to the little Saviour.

There appears to have been an instinctive feeling in the world immediately anterior to the Birth of Our Lord that some great and beneficent potentate was about to be born. Virgil, in whom all Christian antiquity saw a kind of prophet of the Messiah, and whom Dante chooses as the type of human reason leading to Faith, expresses in his fourth Eclogue this expectation of a coming Redeemer. He was probably led to write upon it from the prophecies related by Josephus (Bell. Jud. vij. 31), Tacitus (Hist. v. 13), Suetonius (Vesp. c. 4), or Dion Cassius (lxvi.). At this Advent he says:—

> 'His cradle shall with rising flowers be crowned,
> The serpent's brood shall die; the sacred ground
> Shall weeds and poisonous plants refuse to bear,
> Each common bush shall Syrian roses wear.'

This same idea is very prominent throughout the Christian offices of the season, and it was in these that they of former days found their inspiration. All through Advent there is this calling upon the natural world to arouse itself and be ready for its Creator; 'Rorate coeli desuper et nubes pluant Justum, aperiatur terra et germinat Salvatorem,' begins the season.

'Laetabitur deserta et invia et exultabit solitudo et florebit quasi Lilium, germinans germinabit et exultabit laetabunda et laudans; gloria Libani data est Ei: decor Carmeli et Saron, ipsi videbunt gloriam Domini et decorem Dei nostri,' this is the Lection for the Ember Saturday.

Such passages continually are chosen as tell that, 'The mountains and hills shall sing Lauds before their God, and all the trees of the forest shall clap their hands;' while at the midnight solemnity they bade the 'heavens rejoice and earth be glad, the fields be joyful and all that is therein, let the trees of the wood exult before the face of the Lord, for He cometh.'

The early Christian poet Prudentius in the fourth century in his hymn upon the Nativity commencing, 'Vagitus ille exordium,' says: 'The cry of the Holy Child imparted to the earth a verdant spring at its sound, a revivified globe cast off its ancient slough, the land was covered with flowers, and the dry sands of the desert became redolent with frankincense.'

Abraham a Sancta Clara, in one of his sermons, also specifies some of these old traditions of what seemed most naturally accordant to affectionate piety to have occurred. He says: 'The deep snow which had covered the ground in the same neighbourhood at once disappeared, and in its place were to be seen trees covered with a thick foliage of leaves, while the earth was decorated with a rich and thick crop of the most beautiful flowers.'

Even in our own Shakespeare's time the belief was general that the Holy Night was marked by unusual phenomena:—

> 'Some say that ever 'gainst that hallowed season
> At which our Saviour's Birth is celebrated
> The bird of dawning croweth all night long.
> The nights are wholesome, then no mildew falls,
> No planet strikes, nor spirits walk abroad;
> No fairy takes nor witch hath power to charm;
> So gracious and so hallowed is the time.'—*Hamlet.*

Let us then gather up what remains to us in Christendom, so far as we can, of these tokens of the tradition of Nature's tribute to the Nativity, at least in the realm of botany; and form our Christmas garden, which if not as radiant in colour

as modern luxury demands, will at least be far more full of mental interest to artist, poet, and ecclesiologist, and far more delightfully expressive for all who care for the sacred legends of the trees and herbs than an ordinary one can be.

The Holy Thorn of Glastonbury. Among the trees that blossomed as if to welcome the Saviour's birthday, none is more remarkable than the Thorn which takes its name from Glastonbury, where Drayton sang—

'Trees yet in winter bloom, and bear their summer's green'—*Poly iij.*

To all appearance it is a common Hawthorn (*Crataegus oxyacantha*), but it is of so unusual a habit that in the classification of modern botany it has been placed in a subdivision of its own (variety *praecox*). Externally it can scarcely be said to differ from White Thorns generally; some have thought that its leaves were of a somewhat paler green, and slightly larger, and that the stipules or appendages at the base of the stalk possessed a more leaf-like character than in the ordinary Hawthorns, but practically there is no marked difference. Yet it is a tree which, as old Fuller puts it, 'rides post to bring the first news of the spring holding alone (as it may seem) correspondency with the trees of the Antipodes.'

We should recollect that all the old traditions and proverbs relating to time were the result of observations made by those who lived prior to the introduction of the Gregorian Kalendar of 1582, which was adopted in England in 1752, so that if we desire to prove their general accuracy we must add eleven or twelve days to our present date, e.g. May Day Old Style is our present May 12; Midsummer Day, July 5; Christmas Eve, January 5, and so forth. We shall see this especially necessary to be noted in the case of the Thorn of which we are speaking.

At the Nativity season when the sap of all other Thorns

is at its lowest point, the Holy Thorn, regardless of the severity or mildness of the temperature, revives, leafs, and flowers usually within the very twelve feastful days (viz. Jan. 5-17), and frequently it would seem upon the very night of the Nativity itself (O. S.=Jan. 5). For a few days previous signs of returning life are traceable, then its small buds come forth and burst open with a slight crackling sound, and gradually the whole tree becomes powdered with tiny blossoms, somewhat smaller than those of the ordinary Hawthorn; after a few hours the petals fall away, leaving the fruit to ripen and the leaves to wither, and the tree becomes to all appearance like its fellows, hushed in their winter's sleep. No words have been too ugly during the last century or so for writers to employ when referring to this tree; even when conquered by the weight of testimony to its truth, its flowering was attributed to being an imposition upon the credulous by the Benedictine monks of the neighbouring abbey, who had grafted a Thorn upon a Holly stem, poured hot water on its roots, or obtained the help of the Master of all Black Arts himself! In modern time it has been suggested that it is the Oriental Thorn, but this too is incorrect, for that is a very different tree. The old monks have now gone, and the pious eyes that once revered the sight of its flowering have now been long closed, and the original Holy Thorn cut down, yet still descendants of it remain scattered about the sites of old religious houses, or on our byways, and continue their interesting habit of marking with their tribute the Holy Night.

Parkinson, who was herbarist to Queen Elizabeth and King James I., and who lived therefore in difficult days to speak reasonably upon such things as were labelled as 'superstitious,' quietly suggests that men should not 'slightingly pass by and so smally respect this wonderful phenomenon,' for it was 'a strange work of Nature, or of the God of Nature rather, to cause such a tree, being in all

parts like the common Hawthorn, to blosson twice a year.' Dr. Montague, a Bishop of Bath and Wells, sent a branch as a present to Anne, the Queen of James I., and probably he gathered it from the tree that still grows in the grounds of the palace at Wells, an offspring from that on the side of the hill at Glaston. The custom appears to have existed, at least in the reign of Charles II., of carrying a bough of the Blossoming Thorn in procession upon Christmas Day, and presenting it to the sovereign. Miss Strickland gives from the MSS. of Père Cyprien Gremache a dialogue which took place when first it was brought to the restored monarch. Taking the branch in his hand, the King made it the occasion for a jest—'Well, this is a miracle, is it?' said he.—'Yes,' too readily responded the courtiers, 'a miracle peculiar to England, and regarded with veneration by the Catholics here.'—'How so,' inquired the King, 'when the miracle opposes itself to the Pope? You bring me this miraculous branch on Christmas Day. Does it always observe the Old Style by which we in England celebrate the Nativity in its flowering?'—'Always,' was the answer.—'Then,' said the King, 'the Pope and the miracle differ not a little, for he always celebrates Christmas Day ten days earlier at Rome by Papal orders for nearly a century!'

It should be remembered that England had not then adopted the Gregorian Kalendar, and was consequently still following the Old Style; indeed, when the alteration was made in 1752, it became the custom for people to resort to places where any of the trees sprung from the Holy Thorn were known to exist, and to consult them as affording an unerring proof of the true day of the Nativity. The Rev. Wm. Gilpin tells us how the caretaker of the ruined Abbey at Glastonbury was so perturbed at the profanity of changing the dates, that although he believed it to be possible that his temerity might cost him his head, he wrote to King George, and gravely warned him not to make a decree that

was against Nature, God's infallible witness in this matter. Vast crowds, we are told, assembled around the scion of the original tree that grows at the Abbey hostelry, upon the first Christmas Eve under the New Style. To their 'great disappointment, there was no appearance of its blowing, which made them watch it more narrowly the 5th of January, the Christmas Day Old Style, when it blowed as usual.' Another gathering for the same purpose is recorded in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1753, as taking place at Quainton, Bucks., in which the writer incorrectly speaks of the tree as a Blackthorn. Above two thousand persons, he says, assembled 'with lanthorns and candles to view a Blackthorn which grows in this neighbourhood, and which was remembered (this year only) to be a slip from the famous Glastonbury Thorn;' but upon finding that the tree did not confirm the change of date, they agreed that 'Dec. 25, New Style, could not be the right Christmas Day, and accordingly refused to go to church, treating their friends on that day as usual. At length the affair became so serious that the ministers of the neighbouring villages, in order to appease the people, thought it prudent to give notice that the old Christmas Day should be kept holy as before.' Many similar instances might be quoted of the fidelity of the blossoming of this tree upon old Christmas Eve.

Descendants from the original Holy Thorn are to be found in most of the southern shires of Britain, and probably on the Continent likewise; for a spray was once a highly treasured gift, and the Bristol merchants are reported to have carried on a brisk traffic in their export. There are few old gardens of religious houses that did not possess an example, and they are to be traced not only in their native county of Somerset, but across England. The original tree grew upon the southern ridge of the Wyrral-hill, commonly called the Weary-all, at a spot about half a mile south-west of the town, and close by the old road to the west along the hill-

tops, which is now nearly entirely deserted, since the traveller by the draining of the Sedgemoor no longer needs to keep to the high ground. At the Revolution the venerable tree was cut down, but its stump remained until early in this century, when it was senselessly grubbed up against the protest of local intelligence, and to-day its place is marked by a stone slab. Both before and at its destruction many a slip had been taken from the tree, and it is to be hoped that a successor will be planted by the good folk of Glastonbury upon the spot to continue the historic tradition. At the inn, which was once the guest-house of the Abbey, there is to be seen a fine tree; and another, which is in the grounds of the Abbey itself is often to be found on Old Christmas morning white with blossom, while the ground beneath is white with snow. We have mentioned the handsome specimen in the grounds of the palace at Wells; another is in the garden of what is now a farmhouse at Evercreech, near Bath; and we read of another at Chillington, near Ilminster. A writer in 'Notes and Queries' (iii. 367), says: 'In my neighbourhood (near Bridgewater) the Christmas Thorn blossoms on the 6th of January (Twelfth Day), and on this day only. The villagers in whose gardens it grows, and indeed many others, verily believe that this fact pronounces the truth of this being the day of Christ's Birth.'

In many country places it still continues an annual custom to visit any tree of the kind that exists in the vicinity, and we read of lads and lasses assembling about them in the west to *hear* the buds open. A writer in 'Notes and Queries' instances how the people say, 'As they comed out you could here 'em *haffer*,' a good old English word signifying 'to crackle, to patter, to make repeated loud noises' (Jennings and Halliwell's Dict.). In 1893 a gentleman wrote to the 'Standard' newspaper from Ledbury, Herefordshire, stating that he had seen this Thorn in bud and leaf in spite of the frost and snow that year, and that

some people asserted that it 'crackled all over as the buds came out into flower.' In Dorsetshire we hear of a tree at Upwey, near Weymouth; another at Chideocke; one at a farm, once a nunnery, at Cruxton, near Frome-Vauchurch, said to have red blossoms, but possibly this may be the usual pink Hawthorn, for in Cheshire and Lancashire these trees are called Glastonburys in error or confusion. A fourth in this county is that in the midst of a hollow planted as an orchard, a small Vale of Avalon, at the picturesque spot called Sutton Poyntz, and of a visit to which an amusing account was given by an incredulous journalist in the 'Dorset County Chronicle' for January 17, 1884. He describes how he accompanied the country people to see this Holy Thorn on the Eve of Old Christmas Day, and what he tells is instructive by reason of the contrast it affords between the manner in which a modern assembly regard this wonder in nature, in distinction from those of the 'Dark Ages.' The immodest and ignorant crowd are at first full of vulgar noise and doubt, but at midnight the tree is seen to beautifully unfold its flowers, a scene which should have made the most flippant at least silent, and the most irreverent stilled into admiration, but instead every one rushed and scrambled to tear the gentle monitor into pieces, and eventually only the bare trunk remained.

But to continue our list. In Herefordshire, beside the one at Ledbury, there is another at Clehonger; and in the adjoining county of Worcester both Suckley and Bromyard Down have instances. Old Aubrey, in his 'Natural Remarques on the County of Wilts' (1685), speaks of a wonderful hedge of what he calls Blackthorns, which has now disappeared. 'In the rode that leads from Worcester to Droitwiche,' he says, 'is a Blackthorn hedge at Clayn, half a mile long or more, that blossoms about Christmas Day, for a week or more together. The ground is called

Longland.' Cornwall possesses a Holy Thorn at Warbstow, near Launceston, which a resident testifies to have himself seen in blossom on January 6, not only that year, but annually ('Standard,' January 27, 1893). In Monmouthshire, at Llangattock-Vibon-Avel, there is a granddaughter of the original Glastonbury tree, and its parent is one planted on the mountain called The Skirrid, in memory of its old home on the Wyrral-hill; both these continue to be visited annually by the peasantry around. In Buckinghamshire there is the one at Quainton, and another standing in a field by itself at Shenley, about three miles from Stony Stratford, within a hundred yards of the historic Watling Street. In Essex we find one at Coggeshall, and another at Woodham Ferrers, that at the latter being known as the 'Holly Bush,' and was the source of some comment in the 'Standard' in 1893. This paragraph appeared in January: 'A remarkable scene was witnessed in the parish of Woodham Ferris (*sic*), Essex, on Old Christmas Eve. On that night a number of persons went on a pilgrimage to a village to witness the bursting into leaf of a bush known as the "Holly Thorn." It is a fact that at midnight the bush did burst into leaf. The peculiar features of the phenomenon are that the bush assumes its normal condition a few hours afterwards, and breaks forth with renewed vigour in the spring.'

Aubrey tells us of one in his day at Parham Park, in Suffolk, and another at Bulstrode, while he adds that 'Dr. Ezeril Tony said that about Rummy-marsh [Romny], in Kent, are thornes naturally like that at Glastonbury'; this was at a place called Whey-street, we believe. There was one also growing in Lord Ravensworth's garden at Walham-Green, but now this spot is covered with houses; and Culpepper mentions another as being at 'White Green, near Nantwich,' Cheshire.

We have collected these memorials of the existence

of these Thorns, and wish we were able to make their enumeration more complete; for unless attention be given to them, they will probably disappear in these days of building and change, and from their similarity to the ordinary Hawthorn they are liable to be destroyed unwittingly unless local interest be aroused in their historic value.

We can scarcely part from the record of

'The winter Thorn, which
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord,'

as Tennyson says ('Holy Grail'), without alluding to the legend of its introduction to Glastonbury, for it was also spoken of as St. Joseph of Arimathæa's Staff. The local story was that this pious disciple of Our Lord came from France in a boat to the foot of the now inland Wyrral-hill, and upon arriving there struck his staff into the ground, as if to mark the limit of his earthly pilgrimage, and that this became the tree. Whether St. Joseph ever did come to Avalon will perhaps be doubted, still the tradition in France is very strong of the saint's landing with other holy persons at Marseilles, and of his subsequently making his way into Northern Gaul, and there is no such tradition of his dying there. As to his arrival at the foot of the hill, now some miles inland, that would have been quite possible, since formerly the Sedgemoor formed an arm of the Severn Sea, and up this land-locked mere a boat, such as that recently disinterred near the very spot, could easily have come. The placing of his staff in the ground is an act recalling to one's mind the practice of the early bishops, preserved in the word *stauropegion* for a diocess, of setting up their staff as symbol of their authority; and if this were of Thorn, it might have taken root; for Thorn-trees are not only ageless, but their stocks are singularly tenacious of life, and even when they have been cut away from the root for a long period they will often renew their existence when stuck in the earth. Loudon, in his account of the

tree, says: 'As the Thorn will root from the cuttings of the old wood, on the supposition that Joseph's Staff was a green cudgel, perhaps cut from the first bush he met with after setting his foot on shore to defend himself from the savage inhabitants, the fact of its rooting and becoming a tree may be literally true.' Lastly, the alliance of King Arthur with this town of Avalon, and the quest of his banded knights for the reliquary containing some of the earth from Calvary's Hill, stained by the sacred Blood of the Saviour, and brought hither by St. Joseph, all tend to make one hesitate before dismissing the 'beautiful mediæval romance.' It is sometimes given as a proof of its having been invented in the tenth century that it is only then to be found in writing, but that is no kind of proof, for it is far more probable that the writing was but the embodiment of tradition that had existed for ages before. However, with this we are not now concerned; we need only remark that our forefathers had at least the support of their chroniclers, or, as we now call them, historians; for William of Malmesbury, John of Glastonbury, Capgrave, Matthew of Paris, and many other old writers recorded the belief; and it is quite inaccurate to speak of it as a 'Roman fable,' since the Acta Sanctorum consider the story as not proven.

An old writer remarks upon the Thorn of Avalon that 'God sometimes puts forth such questions and riddles in Nature on purpose to pose the pride of men conceited of their skill in such matters.' To those of old time coming forth from the Midnight Mass where they had heard words like unto, 'Let the trees of the wood exult before the face of the Lord,' the blossoming of the Holy Thorn would appeal as a very wonderful and beautiful illustration, and it would be a very seemly thing to have one of these trees planted in every churchyard. In folk-lore Hawthorns are frequently connected with events in the life of Our

Lord, and this one in particular may be said to mark special seasons in that of both Mother and Son. It first blossoms at the Nativity, and bears its fruit and has its second blossoming in Mary's month of May, *i.e.* about the Ascension or Whitsuntyde, marking, as it were, the beginning and end of the Saviour's work on earth; while its second crop of fruit appears in September about Holy Rood Day (September 14), or that of the Birthday of Mary (September 8).

A Somersetshire ballad is still to be heard in praise of the Holy Thorn, one verse of which runs thus—

> 'The staff het budded and het grew,
> And at Christmas bloom'd the wholdaroo (wonder),
> And still het blooms at Christmas bright,
> But best tha zey at dark midnight.'

It is also the subject of a pretty modern carol by Mr. C. I. Ffoulkes, which appears in a dainty volume entitled 'Noël,' published by Mr. Nutt.

St. Patrick's Bush at Tours. There are other blossoming Christmas thorns of which we know in France; but whether they be offshoots of that at Glastonbury or *vice versâ*, and with what exactitude they observe the festival, or indeed of what species of Hawthorn they are, we have hitherto been unable to find any record. St. Patrick's Bush, near Tours, is little known beyond the department of Indre-et-Loire except to Irish tourists and pilgrims who in their devotion to their national saint find their way thither. It is on the estate of the Marquis de Sesmaisons, just outside the village of St. Patrice, where that patron of the Emerald Isle is said to have preached the Gospel; and it may be noted that St. Patrick and St. Joseph of Arimathæa are both commemorated on the same day in March in the Kalendar. The local tradition, however, is that St. Patrick came to the banks of the

Loire one Christmas Eve; and being unable to find any means of transit across its waters, boldly swam to the other side, and hung up his cloak to dry, when to his astonished eyes the tree upon which it was stretched gradually unfolded its leaf and flower, and every year since has continued to mark the Noël festival. We may be sure that the preacher who showed himself so ready to illustrate the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity by the Shamrock's leaf would not fail to make use of the flowering of this winter Thorn to rouse his audience to do their homage at the Feast of the Incarnation, and would make Nature the parable of things spiritual.

The Dagny Thorn. At Dagny, in the Department of Seine-et-Marne, there is the second Thorn of which we can learn as existing in France, and this again is embodied with the story of a local saint. In the year A.D. 611, the curé of Dagny was the holy priest, the Abbé Geroche, who has been canonized; the commune observes the day of his death, July 2, as its patronal feast, and preserves his bust in the church. He was not only priest of Dagny, but also confessor to the Convent of Farmoutiers, where about the same time lived our Saxon Princesses Edelburgha and Earcongota as Abbess and nun, and both of whom have also been enrolled in the Kalendar of the Saints of the Church. One Christmas Eve the good pastor was summoned to bear the Viaticum to a woman of Malgagne, a hamlet in the commune; the ground was slippery with thawing ice, and the priest took his staff to steady his steps, but notwithstanding all his care he fell and only saved his sacred burthen from accident by leaning so heavily upon his stick as to drive it too far into the earth to be withdrawn. He therefore left it, blessing it for the service it had done to its God, and lo! it took root, and every Noël it flowered as if to recall the old man's blessing, and

tender under its new form of utility the tribute of its adoration.

The Cadnam Oak. At Cadnam, about three miles from Lyndhurst, in the New Forest, upon the Salisbury Road, there are the remains of an Oak, whose brumal budding and leafing marked it out as strangely exceptional to other trees of its kind; and since this reflorescence took place about the Feast of the Nativity it became regarded, like the foregoing Thorns, as being a tribute of Nature to the Saviour. It is difficult to gather the real facts connected with it; for when writers upon the Forest come to speak of it, they are carried away with the zealous spirit of abusing the old monks of Lyndhurst instead of quietly recording and examining any evidence there may be as to the strange habit of this tree. Like as has been so usually the case in reference to the Thorn of Glaston, so with respect to this Oak at Cadnam every base motive has been suggested for the story of its Christmas blossoming. Some repeat the nonsense of paper leaves having been attached during the night, or old leaves which had been preserved in some spirit being hung on to the branches, while others straightway deny the fact of its winter virescence. Mr. Heath, in his edition of Gilpin's 'Forest Scenery' (1879), states that the Oak is still living, and he adds that he was satisfied as to the correctness of its midwinter leafing. The tree he saw is probably that part of the original which escaped uninjured, although the greater portion died; for during the process of the demolition of the venerable tree, the ill-tempered vandal proved as misguided in his strokes as in his zeal, for one of them fell upon his own leg, and from that injury he died. Mr. Heath says that the trunk is now hollow, and half the shell is gone, but that taking the girth of the remaining half bole at three feet from the ground, he found it to be eight-and-a-half feet. Old people

can be found who have gathered sprigs from its budding branches upon Epiphany or Old Christmas Day, and who can remember the time when the Southampton folk used to come and light bonfires around it and make festival about the weary-looking old tree upon that day in the year. At the present it is utterly neglected, its hollowed trunk serving as a place to stack fagots and throw rubbish, but we have pleaded that a tree of such historic interest may be protected by those who have the interests of the Forest at heart; and perhaps when this has been done, sufficient curiosity at least may be aroused to recall attention to its remarkable peculiarity, and to plant a young successor by its side from its acorns.

The best account of the habit of the tree with which we have met is that given by Dean Christopher Wren, who tells us that King James could not be induced to believe in this strange winter budding, and that Bishop Andrewes of Winchester, 'in whose diocese the tree grew, caused one of his own chaplaines, a man of known integritye, to give a true information of itt, which he did: for upon the Eve of the Nativitye [*i.e.* Jan. 5, O.S.], he gathered about a hundred slips, with the leaves newly opened, which he stuck in claye in the bottom of long white boxes, and soe sent them post to the courte, where they deservedly raised not only admiration, but stopt the mouth of infidelitye and contradiction for ever, of this I,' says Dean Christopher, 'was both an eyewitness and did distribute many of them to the great persons of both sexes in court, and others, ecclesiastical persons. But in these last troublesome times a divelish fellow (of Herostratus' humour) having hewen itt round at the roote, made his last stroke on his own legg, whereof he died, together with the old wondrous tree: which now sprowtes up againe, yf some such envious chance doe not hinder or prevent itt: from which the example of the former villane

may perchance deterr the attempte. This I thought to testifie to all future times, and therefore subscribe with the same hand through which those little oakye slips past.'

The Rufus Oak against which Tyrrel's arrow was said to have glanced is asserted by Camden to have sent forth leaves at the Nativity like that at Cadnam, and this is repeated in a MS. letter of Dr. Richard Pococke, Bishop of Ossory, preserved in the British Museum. Writing from 'Dunkton, March 24, 1757,' he says: 'A little beyond it [Malwood], half a mile to the right of the road at the summit of the hill, we were directed to the site of the famous Oak which, it is said, blew on Christmas Day morning and withered before night. Palings were put up round it by Charles II.; and the tree being quite decayed, and the wood taken away, a triangular pillar was set up about sixteen feet high.' He then records the three inscriptions, but they all relate to the death of the Red King, and to the pillar having been erected twelve years previous to the visit of the Bishop. We suspect that both he and Camden must have confused the story of two different trees, although this is not certain; for there were other trees in the Forest besides that at Cadnam which seem to have possessed this unusual habit. At Burley there is what was known as 'The Miracle Oak,' which has the same brumal flowering, while at the same place are other enormous trees, known as 'The Twelve Apostles,' but we cannot learn if they be similarly gifted.

Some Fruit-bearing Trees. Some orchard and other fruits take their names from coming into season so late in the year as to be connected with the Nativity. We have mentioned how the venerable legend prevailed of the Vines in Solomon's garden at Engaddi having become covered with foliage and fruit at the Birth of our Lord,

and we may see, perhaps, the desire to unite that patristic story in the naming of some old varieties of Vines. The Christkindelstaube of Germany, the Muscat de Jésus in France, and that also which they call La Terre de la Promise, seem to be examples of this.

So, too, with regard to other fruits. There is a late Plum of the west of England known as the Christling, and late Pears in France called Fondante de Noël, like the Piru di Natali of Sicily. But it is the Apple that Northern Europe has chiefly regarded as its most useful and characteristic tree; and just as it has been taken to embody the fruit which the Rabbins considered to be that of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the Greek emblem of Discord, so in Teutonic and Keltic mythologies this was the fruit with which they deemed the Paradise of Glaesvellir abounded, and which at Avalon was ever ripe. In all old Kalendars, especially those of Germany, we may see 'Adam et Eva' placed as commemorations for Christmas Eve, as typical of the Fall that necessitated the Incarnation for Redemption; and the connection of the Apple with the expulsion from Paradise, and the means of restoration, led to such names as we have for the cider variety Pommier d'Adam; the valuable and delicious Christ's golden Reinette; the Cross-cored cooking variety, Pomme de Jérusalem, and several others which are in season during the last month of the year.

In many parts of the Continent, as in Brittany still, it is, or was, the custom to go into the orchards on Christmas Eve and drink wassail to the trees. This habit prevailed very generally in England up to late years, and in some orchards fires were lighted in honour of our Lord and His Apostles. Among the German peasantry it is the Apple-tree that they say blossoms on Christmas Eve; but whether it be only one species or in a few places, we have been unsuccessful in ascertaining. We find, however, casual mention

of one at Gera, another at Tribur on the Rhine, and two others in the diocese of Würzburg, as being possessed of the habit of Christmas flowering, but hitherto have been unable to gather any further information concerning these or others.

The Germans have made an acrostic out of the names of trees and plants which seem connected with the Nativity in their land, the initials forming their word for the Holy Night:—

W elke Poley
E ppel
I ndiansche Nelken
N isewurtz
A ndriana
C rocus
H exin, oder Alaunwurtz
T elge, oder Zweige von Kirschen.

Of these, the Dry Poley is the Cunilago or Thymus Serpillum, upon which we shall speak under the Cradle worts; the Indian Chrysanthemum flowers in late autumn; the Hellebore or Christmas Rose we deal with in our next division; the Andriana is probably the Archangel, or Lamium purpureum or album, to which we refer under the Milkworts; the Crocus nudiflorus or Filius ante Patrem and other species appear from October onwards, and are found under the Types of the Incarnation; the Hexin is perhaps the beautiful Staghorn-moss (*Lycopodium clavatum*); and the Telge one of the early flowering cherries.

We may trace to the New World this same habit of connecting their flora with Christmas and other seasons of the Church, and thus carrying on some tradition that existed in the Old World, although united in the New, to different botanical species. In the Mauritius the beautiful

December flowering *Chrysanthemum Indicum* is the 'Christmas Flower' *par excellence*; the Ipomoeas or Morning Glories of the West Indies and Central America have a variety of names, the luxuriant twining *Ipomoea sidifolia* being the 'Christmas Gambol' of the Barbadoes; while other species (*I. Schiedeana*, etc.) are the Manto de la Virgen in Mexico, Flor de Pascua in Venezuela (*I. dissecta*), and Morning Star or Etoile du Matin in the English and French possessions. The unattractive *Psoralea pinnata* is the Christmas Gobblegheer of the people of St. Helena, to whom it is said to be like Holly or Mistletoe with us in England. We read, too, of the striking appearance in the British West Indies of the 'Christmas Pride' (*Ruellia paniculata*) among the bushes in December; while the *Eupatorium aromaticum* is spoken of as another Christmas Bush in those islands, and known in Mexico and Guiana as Yerba del Angel. In Europe our *Eupatorium cannabinum* was known as *Concordia*, as Toxites relates, so that there may be found some connection between these Agrimonies and the Angels' Song of peace to men of goodwill.

We have thought it well to record these examples under the division of Christmas flowering plants, since they appear to have become marked in the abundant flora of this season in equatorial regions from a similar idea to those which we mention here or elsewhere.

The Rose-Mary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*). From its use on Christmas Eve and among the Christmas decorative flora of former days we should have to speak of this aromatic shrub, and we ought to include it perhaps among those plants that flower at the Nativity; for although with us it does not usually blossom before Lady Day, yet in the southern parts of Europe, where it is indigenous, it is no doubt earlier; and it may be true, as Henry Kirke White apostrophises, that there it loves 'to bloom on January's

front severe.' We have lost, during the last century, the use of this interesting shrub from our Yule-tyde greenery, and indeed we seldom find the pleasant bush planted in our gardens where once, when soil was dry and situation favourable, it was wont to be ever present. Up to the eighteenth century it was continually in request, not only for Christmas, but for every season of domestic joy or sorrow, and it became intimately interwoven with human life. In Southern France it has a Sunday named after it, Sexagesima being there known as Lou Dimenche des Roumaris. It followed man from his baptism to his grave, and upon all occasions of his mirth the Rose-Mary was to be seen, while it was cast upon his coffin by sorrowing friends at their last farewell for token of remembrance. In Spain and other countries they attributed all its sweetness to having had hung upon it the swaddling clothes of the Infant Saviour; and with their simple faith in the virtue that lay even in the hem of the garment of the Son of God, they relate that since that time it has remained both ever fragrant and ever green, as if endowed with a double share of vitality. You may see, they say, a sign of the sympathy established between itself and its Creator in its tiny flowers bearing impressed upon them a memorial of His Passion, and by its putting forth fresh buds every Good Friday, as if 'to help to embalm the Body of the Lord.' Books will tell you that in the days of Greece and Rome it had already gained its name of *Libanotis* from its perfume-bearing qualities; but the ears of those of old time only heard in the word the echo of one of their Christmas antiphons which sang 'Deus a Libano veniet,' while *Rosmarinus* only emphasised another in which they prayed, 'Descendat super nos sicut Ros Deus noster.'

In the Keltic dialects it was always Ros Mhairi or Ros Mhuire, our Saxon Rose-Mary, and to the botanists of the sixteenth century it remained an Arbor Sanctae Mariae.

With the Mother and her Holy Child it has thus been allied in affectionate devotion through long ages; and on the Vigil of Mary, as Christmas Eve was called, every home was wont to be fumigated with the fragrant incense of its burning wood. In Spain still, on the Noche buena, as the posada procession wends its way through the corridors and rooms, each person lights at his taper a sprig of the *Encensier*, as the French call it, for it bears with it a promise of good fortune and happiness for the coming year. Even as late as 1790, as we read in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for that year (vol. lx. p. 719), it was the custom in Ripon Cathedral for the chorister boys to bring to the church baskets of apples stuck with a sprig of Rose-Mary, and present one to each of the congregation as a token of goodwill and memorial of the Mother and Son; for the apple was the invariable emblem in the hand of our Lord as the Second Adam, bringing life to the world through the obedience to God's will of the second Eve.

CHRISTMAS ROSES

Anastatica hierocuntica.
Rosa centifolia.
Lonicera caprifolium, and periclymenum.
Helianthus annuus.
Hibiscus Rosa Sinensis.
Helleborus niger.
Poinsettia.
Gladiolus and Iris.
Eranthis hyemalis.

CHRISTMAS ROSES

THE generic title of Christmas Rose has been attached to various plants that come at the Nativity festival, and has not been confined to any one species, while in only one instance has it been allied to what in popular language is understood as a Rose. The Advent foretold how at the coming of the Saviour 'the desert and the byways shall rejoice, and the solitary place be glad and blossom as a Lily (or a Rose, in some translations). Budding it shall burgeon and exult, praising with exceeding joy; for the glory of Libanus is given to Him, the beauty of Carmel and Sharon shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God.' And thus it was that the name of Christmas Rose was especially given to one or two plants that loved the desert or solitary places of earth, although others shared it.

Upon the Holy Night the thought of the men of old time was centred upon the Mother and the Divine Son, and they watched as it were about the bedside of Mary, and awaited the moment when she gave to earth its Creator and Redeemer. We find this vividly recalled in the legend and habit of the dry bundle of heath to which the name has been given of the Jericho or Holy Night Rose (*Anastatica hierocuntica*). The first name comes from a title given with others to Mary from the Book of Ecclesiasticus—'I was . . . as a Rose planted in Jericho.' The plant is usually seen as a dried-up-looking bunch of twigs; for

when its leaves wither and fall off, the branching stems curl inwards and form a round ball; the roots loose their hold upon the desert soil, and the winds roll the globular mass across the sandy wastes, until coming to a moist place created by the winter rains, it is affected by the damp and strangely unfolds, shedding then its seed where it may germinate. This reviving power that it exhibits led to its being called *Anastatica* or the Resurrection flower, and any one might well ask, 'Can these bones live?' when looking at the plant in the state with which we are usually acquainted, for nothing can appear more sere and lifeless; but place the root in moist sand or water, and gradually it will expand and show the truth of the simile that mediæval eyes saw. For Mary was the '*Radix de terra sitienti*,' the root out of the thirsting earth, who, when the dew of the Holy Spirit fell upon her, bore the Divine Child in her breast, and gave Him forth to a parched-up earth, and it was this symbolism that made the Jericho Rose connected with the Christmas night. Few pilgrims returned from the Holy Land without bringing one from thence, even from Bethlehem itself, and they do so still, for they are attractive as curiosities to ordinary visitors, although the cherished tradition is frequently unknown. They liked in old days to have them upon their altars at the Midnight Mass, and within their homes, not for the indulgence of the eye, but as a venerable simile that came to them straight from that Eastern land which gave the Saviour birth, and about whose deserts and mountains Mother and Son had roamed together. An old seventeenth century physician says: 'In some churches this Rose of Jericho is piously plunged in tepid water upon the Holy Night of the Nativity of the Lord Christ (I fear not without superstition) about midnight (at which hour Christ the Lord was born) as an emblem of the virginal birth' (W. Du Val, 'Hist. monogramma,' Paris 1643). But there need be no superstitious

feeling with regard to it, any more than with any other natural type; and it would not be an inappropriate one to be placed again upon the altar for the priest, or upon the household shrine for the family, to feed their minds with pious thought. This domestic use of the Jericho Rose is followed to this day in some quiet homes; for we read in Leonhardi's 'Vierteljahrschrift' an account of a ceremony that takes place annually at Poschiavo at the foot of the Bernina Pass, and which they call 'The Vigil of the Christmas Rose.' After the service in the church, the villagers adjourn to one of the houses in the town, where the housewife places candles upon a table with a Rose of Jericho in a bowl of water between them. The company stand round watching the expanding fibres; and when the last has uncurled itself, the head of the house announces, 'The Christmas Rose has opened;' immediately all the bells are rung, the shout of 'Noël! Noël!' is raised, a hymn or song of joy is sung in chorus, and all disperse into the crisp night air singing carols on their way home.

There were many traditions that became connected through the long ages with this 'Rose of the Holy Night;' it was said to have sprung up wherever the Holy Family rested in their Flight into Egypt; and quite certainly it would be found by the poor fugitives across the desert sands. Some told how it first blossomed at the Saviour's Birth, closed at the Crucifixion, and revived again at Easter, while others would relate how it opened at all the feasts of Mary. It was deemed to be welcome to all women in their hour of travail, as fixing their thoughts on the Bethlehem scene, and even by Moslem and most Eastern peoples it is spoken of as *Kaf Miriam* or Mary's hand; for it is placed by the bedside of the matron with the belief that when it has fully expanded, she will remember no more her anguish for joy that a man is born into the world.

The *Anastatica hierocuntica* is universally known as the

Rose of Jericho; in Germany and Switzerland we hear it spoken of as the Weihnachtsblume and Marienrose; in Italy as Rose de la Madona; in Bohemia as Ruze Panny Marie; and in France as Rose de Marie. But notwithstanding this, there are some who question if it be the true flower referred to as the Rose of Jericho, since it cannot be said to be possessed of any beauty in appearance, and this from its alliance with the Blessed Virgin they say might be expected to exist. It is stated, moreover, that the plant is not to be found at Jericho, but it may be mentioned that neither are the trees which once led to that city being named the 'City of Palms.' It is certainly abundant in other parts of Syria and Arabia; and even if it do not satisfy the eye by its beauty, yet this was little regarded when compared with the simile it bore in its hygrometric sensitiveness. It is certainly this plant that is held still in the esteem of all Oriental peoples, and about it and no other are entwined all the traditions that in mediæval time were prevalent concerning the Rose of Jericho. MM. Saulcy and Michon consider a plant known botanically as the *Asteriscus aquaticus* (Moench. var. Pygmaeus D.C.) to be more truly so called, since it possesses the hygrometric qualities even more remarkably, and under the influence of moisture its fibres immediately disentangle and stand up. In their work, 'Voyage autour de la Mer Morte,' they say they found the latter abundant in the plain of Jericho; moreover, they discovered upon looking at the armorial bearings of families reaching to the Crusades, that it was the *Asteriscus* and never the *Anastatica* that was employed. But notwithstanding the opinion of these worthy people, we do not think that there can be any hesitancy in favour of the *Anastatica*, the continuity of its name and use up to the present day is too solid a fact to allow of doubt; heraldic botany is entirely uncertain, and the two plants have not sufficient divergency in form for us to rely upon this argument; finally, the instantaneous

opening of the *Asteriscus* would not have commended it to the eyes of women at child-birth.

If we leave the old traditional plant and required one more beautiful, yet retaining the same remarkable qualities, we should find it in the Canadian Bird-nest Moss (*Seliginella lepidophilla*), sometimes called the Resurrection Flower, which is a ball of dried moss that opens out upon being placed in water, displaying a perfectly smooth surface of brilliant green. It is probably one of the many instances of the Old World traditions becoming transferred to the New World of the West, and there repeating the story of the Jericho Rose, although in a different plant. In Portugal they give the name of Rosa cheirosa de Jericho to what we are familiar with as our favourite Rose of Provence, or Cabbage Rose (*Rosa centifolia*), and the allying of the name with so sweet and lovely a flower as this is far more attractive than to the dry bundle of twigs to which it historically belongs. Any one acquainted with the *Anastatica* will also easily understand how the bunched heads of many Honeysuckles, especially the *Lonicera Caprifolium* and *Periclymenum*, reminded men in summer of the Rose of the Nativity, and thus became known in Germany as Lilien or Rosen von Hiericho. 'Like a wreath of heavenly trumpets breathing melodies of perfume to the air,' these honeysuckles may be found about Nazareth as well as most other parts of the Holy Land, and our own peasants' name for the flower of 'Our Lady's Fingers' is but the *Kaf Miriam* or Mary's Hand of the Arabs for the *Anastatica*. Another charming old English name for them was that taken from the Canticles of Solomon—'The Lily among Thorns,' while the French title of Bouquet de la Sainte Vierge all unite them to the Blissful Mother.

In Italy they give the name of Rose of Jericho to the Annual Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), as well as to the *Anastatica*, and Ulrich says that the title is found in Ger-

many for the Hibiscus or Rose Mallow of the tropics (*Hibiscus Rosa Sinensis*), but perhaps more for its poetical beauty than as a devotional memorial.

The Rose of Jericho has thus evidently been a very favourite designation for various kinds of herbs, but the true one is more curious than decorative, a venerable symbol or type rather than a beautiful one. In the Hellebores (*Helleborus niger*) we have Christmas Roses not only lovely to the eye but appropriated to the season by very delightful association. All are acquainted with the waxy white or delicate, blush-tinted flower that braves the rigours of winter to welcome Christmas, while its leaves, with their vigorous growth and their pale-green mottled stems, bring verdure and gladness to the solitary places of earth. Throughout northern Europe this plant is known as the Holy Night Rose, Rose of Noël, or Christ's Flower or Bloom, and the origin of the names is worth the telling. In the old mystery-plays of the Nativity a maiden, named Madelon, was represented as coming with the shepherds to Bethlehem to see the great thing that had come to pass, and of which the angels had told them. She was very poor, and her woman's heart was so moved by the penury of the manger scene that she burst into tears at having nothing to offer to comfort the Blessed Mother and show her sympathy and love for the little Child. The shepherds played a lullaby upon their rustic pipes, and perchance brought a fleece to warm the cave that made the bed of Mary, but Madelon had nought to offer but her prayers and tears. God seeing her, sent Gabriel to her who said, 'Madelon, what makes you weep while you pray?' And she answered, 'My Lord, because I have nothing to offer to the Infant Jesus; even if I had but some flowers to give Him I should be happy, but it is winter, and the frost is in the ground and spring is far away; good angel, I am most distraught.' Then the Herald of the Annunciation

took her by the hand and led her forth into the dark night, but as they went the cold seemed gone, and a golden light to envelop them, and they came to places that Madelon knew not of. Gabriel paused and touched the rigid earth with his staff, and lo! on every side sprang up these pure blossoms of the Holy Night Rose, and running from his side the shepherd maiden filled her arms with their flowers to deck the cave upon the first Christmas Day. Hence it is that in some painters' works, as in Filippino Lippi's picture of the Holy Family in our National Gallery, they introduce a vase of Noël Roses, and in the mystery-plays Madelon is usually represented as offering a garland of these flowers or wreathing them about the neck of a lamb. A modern French poet, Emile Blémont, has very charmingly told the story, whose moral was

> 'Though thou art poor and hast no gold to bring,
> Though ice-bound earth no Heaven-sent flowers bestows,
> Yet give thy heart this Noël to thy King.
> This is the Legend of the Christmas Rose.'

But beside the beautiful Hellebores there are other flowers which claim a place upon the Holy Night in our homes and churches. In Spain the magnificently coloured Poinsettia is known as the Flor de Noche buena as well as Flor de Pascua, for its flaming star is one of the most beautiful emblems of that of Bethlehem that this season affords. It is now a familiar sight in our greenhouses, but in more southern Europe it is to be seen growing in the open air with its fiery burst of crimson gazing upon the midnight sky. Its popular introduction into England of recent years makes it easy for us to add the Poinsettia to our Christmas flora as one of the most striking of the season's dedicated flowers.

In Sicily we read of a lovely blue 'Gigghiu di Natale' that comes at this season of the year with delicate colouring and a fragrance that makes it especially welcome;

while in northern Italy, at least among the Friulani, they call either the same or another plant 'Rose di Nole.' We understand that one is probably a Gladiolus and the other an Iris, but have been unable at present to identify them. It is worth remarking that the garden varieties of our common Corn-flag (*Gladiolus communis*) have the name of 'Jacob's Ladder' in the old-fashioned nomenclature of the counties of Devon, Gloucester, and Suffolk, and that this was a constantly used mediæval type of the Incarnation.

There is still another Christmas rose for us to mention before we have exhausted our list, and that is not only true in its flowering at this season of the year, but it also fulfils the prophecy as to earth's welcome to the Saviour. The winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*) is to the French still the Rose de Noël, as it was our 'Christmas flower' in the days when Coles wrote his 'Art of Simpling.' Its yellow flowers, surrounded with a whorl of shining green foliage, love the wilderness and desert places in the garden, covering waste spots with their much-divided leaves, and lifting a golden blossom to the Christmas sun. Nor should we omit to mention the Rose of Mariastern in Alsatia, that is said to flower upon the feast of the Nativity, but of whose species and exactitude of blossoming we have been unable to obtain reliable information.

TYPES OF THE INCARNATION

Tree of Jesse or Rod of Jacob.

Polianthes tuberosa.
Dracaena terminalis.
Malba Alcaea.
Asphodelus luteus.
Campanula persicifolia.
Erigeron Alpinus.
Verbascum Thapsus.
Viscum album.
The 'Christmas-Tree.'

Jacob's Ladder or Scala Coeli.

Polemonium coeruleum.
Polygonatum multiflorum, Allion.
Polygonum orientale.
Chelidonium majus.
Delphinium.

The Burning Bush.

Ilex aquifolium.
Ruscus aculeatus, etc.
Dictamnus fraxinella.
Acacia seneh.
Crataegus pyracantha.
Cerasus pyracantha.

Gideon's Fleece.

Drosera.

Filius ante Patrem.

Tussilago farfara and fragrans.
Crocus nudiflorus, medius, and iridiflorus.
Gnaphalium germanicum.

TYPES OF THE INCARNATION

THE thought of Christendom was united at the Nativity in contemplating the Humanity of the God and the Immaculate Virginity of the Mother. The object of the festival's teaching was the bringing home to man's mind the infinite wonder and humility of the God clothing Himself with human flesh, and next, that if it had not been for the consent of Mary and her correspondence to the Divine Will, the Incarnation could not have taken place. Hence it is that in art and liturgy, carol and custom, the Mother and Son are continually together; but the part taken by each in the work of man's Redemption is entirely distinct, and their relative positions are never confounded. It is

> 'Mary the Root, but Christ the Mystic Vine,
> Mary the Grape, but Christ the Sacred Wine,
> Mary the Cornsheaf, Christ the Living Bread,
> Mary the Rose-tree, Christ the Rose blood-red.'

The 'great O Antiphons' that precede the festival all refer to Our Blessed Lord and end upon the 23rd, but there was one once employed upon the 24th, the Vigil of Mary, as it was named in some places, which is very beautifully eloquent of the wonder of the Virgin Mother and of her submission to what was the Will of God. 'O Virgin of Virgins,' it sang, 'how shall this thing be? For neither before thee was there any like unto thee, nor shall there be hereafter;' and the Virgin answers, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, why marvel ye at me? The thing that ye behold is a Divine Mystery.'

There were several types of the Incarnation which were so prominently employed in the divine offices from the earliest times, that we should be surprised to find them absent in the sacred flora of the Christmas season.

The Tree of Jesse or Rod of Jacob. The prophecy of the dying Jacob which had sustained the hope through the long ages of a coming of a Messias, was that the sceptre and legislative power should not be utterly taken away from the house of Judah until about the time when One who was also the Expectation of the Gentiles should appear (Gen. xlix. 10, Micah v. 2). Again and again in the Advent offices the promise is re-echoed 'Erit radix Jesse et Qui exurget regere gentes, in Eum gentes sperabunt' or 'Egredietur Virga de radice Jesse et Flos de radice ejus ascendet; et requiescet super Eum Spiritus Domini.' The wail of one of the great O Antiphons continues the cry, 'O Radix Jesse Qui stas in signum populorum veni liberandum nos, jam noli tardare'; and finally at the Nativity the announcement is heard: 'Germinavit Radix Jesse, orta est stella ex Jacob, Virgo peperit Salvatorem.'

In the similarity between the words Virga, a Rod, and Virgo, the Virgin, the early symbolic writers found a fruitful source of speculation. A Bishop of Chartres in 1007 composed the introit for Mary's birthday which shews how they loved to play with the words:

> 'Stirps Jesse Virgam produxit, Virgoque Florem
> Et super hunc Florem requiescit Spiritus almus,
> Virgo Dei genitrix, Virga est; Flos, Filius ejus.'

It was but the versifying of the text quoted above, taken from the prophecy of Isaias, and used in the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin in Advent and elsewhere.

It was from this simile that the luxuriantly designed Jesse-trees arose with which most of us must be familiar in every form of work of mediæval times, whether

covering a plain surface upon some domestic, civic, or ecclesiastical building, sculptured in stone at the back of some altar as at Christchurch, Hampshire; beautifully adapted to form the tracery of a window as at the Abbey Church at Dorchester, Oxfordshire; or brilliant with rich colouring in glass, fresco, or embroidery. In every material and place it was one of the artist's most lovely and useful designs, boundless in the scope afforded for inventiveness and effectiveness, while redolent of the fundamental dogma of Christianity. The emblem was not even confined to decorative purposes but was applied to articles of furniture, and originated those many-branched brass candelabra once known as 'Jesse-trees,' now commonly called 'spiders,' but which were once common in churches and homes. They were especially frequent in Belgium and Germany, being invariably surmounted by a Dove or double-headed Eagle, as emblems of the Holy Spirit, or by the Madonna and her Son. An old Abbot of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, bought one for the choir of his church as long ago as 1097 'in partibus transmarinis,' which he describes as 'candelabrum magnum in choro aereum quod Jesse vocatur.' (Thorn, *Dec. Script.* col. 1796.)

Such then being the familiarity and prominence of this type of the Incarnation, let us consider how it was recalled in Nature by certain trees and herbs in the daily life of men. Among the flora the name seems usually connected with those whose stems are long and bare until at the end they burst into flower, or with those whose sides were studded with blossoms, but in art it is usually either a Vine or a Rose that springs from the loins of the sleeping patriarch Jacob, giving forth as it rises upwards the various chief persons in the royal line that lead to Jesse and his son David. At the summit in the chalice of a flower repose either the emblems of the Holy Spirit ('requiescet

super Eum Spiritus Domini') the double-headed Eagle or the Dove, or else there stands the Mother with her Divine Son.

We find the name of Vara di Jesé or Rod of Jesse given in Spain to the Tuberose (*Polianthes tuberosa*) whose long bare rod rises several feet from the ground and at its summit is thickly studded with the flowers of this deliciously scented dweller in the South; and the same land carried the name to the Philippine Islands and gave it to the *Dracaena terminalis* of a similar kind of growth, a plant which has become a graceful addition to our own conservatories and winter gardens. The Spaniard has also called the Holyhock (*Alcaea rosea*) Varitas de David, its flowering stem suggesting the stages of a soaring genealogical tree, and the French name for the same, of Baton de Jacob and probably our own Holly or Holy-hocke may have originated in a similar connection. Those plants which now simply bear the name of Rod or Staff of Jacob had possibly the same reference as the Jesse-tree, for as the Douai translation explains in its notes to Gen. xlvij. 31, and Hebr. xi. 21, the patriarch's homage to the top of his staff was an act of faith in the coming Messias, the staff being the patriarchal sceptre whose flower was Christ, the end and completion of the house of Jacob. It is likely that it is this that led men to name the climbing flower-stalk of Yellow Asphodel in England and Ireland Jacob's Rod or Staff, just as in France it remains Le Baton or La Verge de Jacob. Many a Campanula is not only Jacob's Rod but also Mary's Bell, and the species known as *Persicifolia* is the Bâton de Jacob in France and the Rosa mystica of Verona and northern Italy. The small *Erigeron Alpinus* in Iceland called Jakobsfiffil is a similar example, while in Cumberland the Great Mullein or *Verbascum* is as well known as Jacob's Staff as elsewhere it is Mary's Taper.

But we believe that it is in the Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) that this type of the 'Virga de radice Jesse' was illustrated by our Christian forefathers in northern lands, and that it is to this that we may attribute its prominence amid the Yule-tyde greenery. It is the custom of late years to exclude the Mistletoe from church decorations probably for reasons of propriety, and to retain it in the homes of the people, but it certainly was not the habit of mediæval days to have in the one what was discountenanced in the other; the home was but the reflex of the church; the habit of life, the customs and domestic rites of the one were the expression of the dogmas and ritual of the other, and you could not be pagan in one and Christian in the other with any sincerity to the time. The old Druid reverence for the Mistletoe would strengthen, not lessen the interest with which Christians regarded it when once they perceived in the weird parasite an emblem of one of their own dogmas, for they would feel that other forms of faith had also recognised something uncommon and remarkable in it, and they would find in that very fact a foreshadowing of the strivings of their pagan ancestors through natural religion to attain to truths which to them were assured by revelation; moreover, as far as our imperfect knowledge will allow us to judge, this Druid reverence for the Mistletoe bough was prompted by the same mystery which led to its Christian interpretation and may have even suggested its application. If investigation were made it would probably be found that the exclusion of the Mistletoe from the church has no authority in ancient practice. A writer in the 'Folklore' journal (for December, 1896) remarks that in N. Staffordshire, and 'in the Black Country it was formerly used to decorate churches. Mr. Lawley,' he adds, 'quotes entries of payments for Mistletoe for this purpose from Churchwardens' Accounts at Bilston in 1672 and Darlaston in

1801.' We might also add that Gay in his 'Trivia' (ij. 437) bids us

> 'Now with bright Holly all the temples strow,
> With Laurel green and sacred Mistletoe,'

thus testifying that in his day its banishment was not needful, and perhaps if we regarded it with something of the meaning with which we think it was invested by Christian eyes, we should feel that it was well worthy of our retention.

The Mistletoe furnished a singularly striking and arrestive emblem of the doctrine of the Incarnation. The Saturday office of the Blessed Virgin thoughout the year, as well as the teaching of the Nativity itself, vividly impressed upon the minds of the faithful the mystery of God springing from a human source, perfect God and perfect man. In the Mistletoe which Nature gave them to become most verdant in winter they beheld a rod springing from Jesse's stem, an ordinary tree having upon it an offshoot different and unlike any other it produced; a golden bough distinct and peculiar to everything the old stock had even seen or known before; an innovation, it seemed, of natural law, for though taking fibre and substance from the womb of the parent tree, it possessed a nature and essence quite different, and an origin apart from the wood upon which it grew. No one wandering through the woods in winter when all the trees are leafless, and seeing a branch of fresh Mistletoe shooting forth from some lichen-covered trunk, could fail to recognise the beautiful emblem it was of the Rod of Jesse arising in vigour amid a world of death from a source which looked like unto its fellows. The words of the Church's offices seem to be extraordinarily exemplified in this emblem, such as—'Mirabile mysterium declaratur hodie: innovantur naturae, Deus homo factus est: id quod fuit permansit et quod non erat assumpsit,

non commixtionem passus, neque divisionem.' 'O admirabile commercium! Creator generis humani animatum corpus sumens de Virgine nasci dignatus est; et procedens homo sine semine.' 'Magnum haereditatis mysterium: templum Dei factus est uterus nescientis virum: non est pollutus ex ea carnem assumens: omnes gentes venient dicentes: Gloria Tibi Domine.' The words of a hymn attributed to St. Ambrose and used in the ancient Cistercian Breviary seem almost written within sight of the Mistletoe bough, for it is only of late years that the mystery of how the shrub is propagated has been discovered.

'Non ex virili semine
Sed mystico spiramine
Verbum Dei factum est Caro
Fructus quae ventris floruit.'

Just as the Incarnation was the greatest gift of God to man's spiritual needs, so was this emblem of it in Nature potent in his bodily ones. Not only was it deemed protective by its presence against all lightning, witchcraft, phantoms, and evil spirits, but it occupied a very real place in the pharmacy of early days as sovran in epilepsy, and it does so still. In Wales they yet call epilepsy 'The rod of Christ,' from the use of Mistletoe in its cure, a name for it found also in other parts of Europe, but it was more popularly known as St. Valentine's sickness, and that saint's memory seems inextricably interwoven in English thought with lovers and their pastimes. But the connection between epilepsy and St. Valentine arose in days when faith was strong and medical science weak, when it was the habit to have some saint allied to each complaint to whom the poor sufferers might go as their daysman with the Great Physician, and hence this disease became known as the Mal di S. Valentine, Veltenstanz or Danse de St. Gui.

This use of the shrub in St. Valentine's sickness will explain how that saint in France is often spoken of as St. Gui or St. Mistletoe; but it is not from this connection that it has obtained the association most popularly now united to its presence. It is exceedingly probable that the custom of saluting beneath the Mistletoe had its origin in the practice of giving the Pax universally at this the great feast of Reconciliation of God to man. This salutation has now for many centuries been restricted in the West to the clergy or ecclesiastical bodies, but formerly, as in Russia still, it was the habit at the Christmas Mass for the congregation to salute each other with such words as 'Christ is born to-day,' and after bowing to kiss each other on the cheek or place their lips on the little metal tablet known as a Pax which was passed from one to another. In many old pictures, such as that of the Nativity by Botticelli in our National Gallery, the angels with olive boughs are represented as saluting the shepherds as typical of the peace sent from Heaven to men of goodwill, and it is not at all improbable that in the merrie England of former time the interchange of a salute and taking a berry from the Mistletoe-type of the Incarnate Prince of Peace was a pretty token of good-feeling at this season. Stukeley, in his 'Medallic History of Carausius' (ij. 164), speaks of a custom that existed 'lately at York' and 'still preserved in the North,' of carrying a bough of 'Mistletoe to the high altar of the cathedral,' and proclaiming towards the four quarters of the earth a general freedom and liberty. We cannot learn anything further than this concerning the custom now apparently forgotten, but it reads very like what may be seen upon New Year's Eve at Notre Dame in Paris, when the archbishop, on behalf of himself and the clergy of his diocese, pronounces solemnly from the high altar the 'Amende honorable,' in fulfilment of

the angelic salutation, 'In terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.'

The legend connecting the Mistletoe with the Tree of the Cross we shall have to consider in a future volume, when we speak of the Flora of the Passion, and need not now stay to relate, since we have here but to regard its presence in the Nativity flora as a parable of the dogma of the Incarnation.

We would venture to suggest that in what we know as the Christmas-tree, we have also another very beautiful illustration of the Jesse-tree, for in every complete tree there is upon the summit the Mother and Son, while the lights upon its ascending branches were like those in the brazen Jesse candelabrum of the churches and houses, to represent the prominent persons in the human ancestry of our Lord. We cannot but recognise, in the great popularity of the custom of having these trees at the Christmas festival more especially in Austria and Germany, lands where the genealogical emblem of the Tree of Jesse was employed in every form of decorative art with a richness of heraldic imagery and beauty of invention unknown elsewhere, that we have the same idea brought into the homely life of the people, and adapted to domestic decoration. The custom, as far as we can learn, is connected in Germany with the early apostolic labours of St. Maternus in that country; investigation is almost sure to prove its religious symbolism, as in the case of most ancient rites. Human nature has so often found the same methods of expressing the mysteries of faiths that differ in themselves, that men seize upon the coincidence as if it proved identity of meaning. We are often told that the Christmas-tree custom is but the Assyrian 'Tree of the great Light,' or some Aryan equivalent; others will be equally sure that it is a continuation of the Scandinavian Yggdrasil; but even if it were these, it is not with their meaning that it has been adopted by Christian peoples, any

more than a pagan temple when used as a church was to continue the same worship. It is said that before the Hanoverian house came to the English throne, the pretty custom was apparently unknown in this land of having this lighted Pine-top, but yet there are indications of something similar having existed. In the north-east Riding of Yorkshire, and also about Leeds, places where the songs of Wassail are still sung (although the word has been corrupted into Vessel, Wessel, or even Wesley!), children bear about a kind of portable Christmas-tree hung with oranges and apples, which they call their 'Wessel-bob.' Within a bower among its branches is placed a doll, no doubt formerly that of the Madonna and Child. In other parts of Yorkshire the same is to be met with amid the conservative republic of childhood. There was a very ancient custom also of drawing upon a trolley through the streets of Brough, a tree illuminated with rush torches upon Old Christmas Eve (Jan. 5), and accompanying it with music. It was known as the Hollins or Holly-tree procession, but has probably now fallen into abeyance. In Monmouthshire we learn there is the practice remaining of carrying about a similar tree to that in Yorkshire, but it is of Yew instead of Pine. We read of a Christmas pageant given before Henry VIII., and recorded by Hall the historian, where upon a mound was 'a tree of golde, the braunches and bowes frysed with golde, spredynge on every side over the mountayne, with Roses and Pomegarnettes.' These are some signs of a Christmas-tree having once had a place in the season's ritual in England, and probably others might be found. It was, if not introduced, at least revivified and accentuated by the German house coming to the throne, just as the same nationality has restored Santa Klaus both here and in the United States. In 1789 we read in 'Mrs. Papendick's Journals' (ij. 158) that 'this Christmas Mr. Papendick proposed an illuminated tree according to the

German fashion;' and Mr. Chas. Greville, in his 'Memoirs,' speaks of the Princess Lieven at Panshanger having these trees. In the Life of Mary Howitt (p. 157), we find 'Our practical knowledge of the Christmas-tree was gained in this first winter in Heidelberg (1840). Universal as the custom now is, I believe the earlier knowledge which the English public had of it was through Coleridge in his "Biographia Literaria." It had at the time I am writing of —1840—been introduced into Manchester by some of the German merchants established there. Our Queen and Prince Albert likewise celebrated the festival with its beautiful old German custom. Thus the fashion spread.' So little has been done to trace the origin of this practice, we think it well to collect these few notices together in contribution thereto.

Even if the lighted Christmas-tree were but originally some Teuton ceremony at the winter solstice, it would be a pleasant one to preserve, but when these venerable pagan rites come to us as Christianised observances, they possess a claim upon the historic and artistic sense as well as upon our devotional appreciation. Whether the former use of this tree be true we cannot tell, but certainly for very many centuries in both 'high and low Almaigne,' from Emperor to peasant, it has been the habit to have this tree in palace and cottage. It is to be remarked, moreover, that no tree is complete in those lands without the figure of the holy Mother with her Babe in her arms at the summit, and a stable scene frequently at its base, and even in the Protestant districts of Germany a doll is still usually employed. A young Fir or a Pine top is that made use of, not only as affording strength and uniformity, but of definite purpose, for we should not forget that 'Benigne Braunchlet of the Pine-tree' is a title of the Virgin Mother, as we may see in Chaucer's 'Ballad of Commendation of Our Lady;' and such language as 'Thou art the Pine-tree outstretching

its branches of grace and salvation' is not uncommon in sermons of the twelfth century (Peter of Blois, Archdeacon of London).

Bright with candles the Christmas-tree makes one of the most delightfully festive additions to the domestic expressions of rejoicing at the Nativity, for it seems to proclaim the creed that in the stable of David's city was born of her who was the 'Virga de Radice Jesse,' the Christ who was 'Lumen de Lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero.'

Jacob's Ladder or Scala Coeli. The Incarnation being the union of Heaven to earth, of God to man, it was symbolised by the Ladder of the patriarch Jacob's vision, and since Mary was the means by which this union took place, this type of the Scala Coeli became one of her titles. In many parts of Europe it was a tradition, and is still in Poland, that at the moment that marks the Saviour's birth the high heavens open, and the scene of Jacob's vision is once again repeated of angels descending to earth. Many a folklore tale exists of heavenly visitants coming to man under the guise of the wayfarer at the Christmas season, and no petitioner was ever turned away from the door unrelieved by an alms, lest it might perchance be some divine person in reality.

Although there is no flower employed at Christmas which bears the name of this type of the Incarnation, still there are two or three that come later in the year by which they recalled this title. That most generally known in northern Europe is the useful common border-plant called Greek Valerian (*Polemonium coeruleum*), the Himmels- or Jakobs-leiter of Germany; the Echelle de Jacob of France; Jakobssteige or -stige of Sweden and Denmark. It has the same names with us in England, and also that of Herb Charity, the first of the virtues mentioned by St. Paul (Gal. v. 12) in his Ladder of human Perfection, which was

often frescoed upon our church walls. The Polemonium has a stem that rises eighteen or twenty inches high with foliage branching from either side of it in regularly successive stages, and mounting upwards to a spike of purplish-blue or white flowers; and although it seems to be better known as Greek Valerian, it has no kind of affinity with that family of herbs.

The old botanical title of Scala Coeli is also borne by the Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum multiflorum*), which in Berkshire is still spoken of as Jacob's Ladder, and since each pair of leaflets is accompanied by the interesting flower of this beautiful herb, it made a very pretty parable of the progressive stages in the life of virtue. In France the Persicaria (*Polygonum orientale*) has the name of La Montée au Ciel, and in Shropshire the Jacob's Ladder is the Greater Celandine (*Chelidonium majus*), while in Devonshire the spire of the Larkspur is so known (*Delphinium*), but perhaps their enumeration is sufficient to show at least that the title was once a familiar one.

The Burning Bush. It was a favourite practice of the graphic artists of mediæval time to oppose type and antitype for the consideration of the faithful. In such works as the 'Biblia Pauperum' we see the Old Testament type of Moses before the fiery thorn on Sinai corresponding to the New Testament antitype of the Holy Babe in the cradle at Bethlehem, or in the ancient glass left in Canterbury's Cathedral Church, 'Moses cum Rubo' has its complement in 'Angelus cum Maria,' while beneath is the ejaculation 'Rubus non consumitur, tua nec comburitur in carne virginitas.'

This was one of the most prominent types of the immaculate purity of the Virgin Mother at the Incarnation and Birth of her Lord and Son, and would belong more strictly perchance to her flora if it were not so inseparably

connected with the offices and the greenery employed at the Feast of the Nativity. In the former we have one of the 'great O Antiphons' in the novena, beginning 'O Adonai, et Dux domus Israel, Qui Moysi in igne flammae Rubi apparuisti,' etc., to which at the octave the fulfilment is given, 'Rubum quem viderat Moyses incombustum conservatam agnovimus tuam laudibilem virginitatem sancta Dei genitrix.' For Mary was the Bush on fire with the Holy Spirit, that concealed the Deity and gave Him human shape and substance and yet remained a Virgin. One of Chaucer's addresses to her is that invocation in the 'Prioress's Tale,' beginning—

'O Mother Maid! O Maid and Mother free!
O Bush unburnt burning in Moses' sight!'

or as he says in the 'A. B. C.'—

'Moises, that saugh the Bush with flaumes rede
Brenninge, of which ther never a stikke brende,
Was signe of thyn unwemmed maidenhede.
Thou art the bush on which ther gan descende
The Holy Gost, the which that Moises wende
Had ben a-fyr; and this was in a figure.
Now Lady, from the fyr thou us defende
Which that in helle eternally shal dure.'

It was once a favourite device for ecclesiastical artists, both in the East and West, to depict or carve the Mother and Son enthroned in a tree of flame, and few motives could be so full of inspiration for both the designer and beholder, yet, like the rich tracery of the Jesse-tree, we seldom or never see it employed in modern work; both contain quite unlimited scope for decorative purposes, whether in stone, glass, or embroidery, and seem complements of each other in their dogmatic teaching; while the trees and herbs that have been associated with them in Nature are also highly capable of artistic treatment.

The especial tree which we, in these northern latitudes, have chosen as our type of the Burning Bush is the Holly or Holy tree (*Ilex aquifolium*), one which we have pre-

eminently called the 'Christmas' bush, and which seems peculiarly suitable to the people of England, whose forefathers loved to speak of their country as the 'Dowry of Mary.' It is certainly the most pictorially effective ornament that winter spares to us, delighting the eye as it gracefully rises from the virgin snow with its white stem, deep green leaves, and scarlet fruit. In the silent woods when the snow lies on the ground like Nature's pall spread over her vast sleeping place, when all the trees are bare save for the oak's sered and fluttering leaves, then we may see in the Holly a picture of joyous hope. Its glossy foliage bent into varying planes produces a play of light and shade that gives a singular life to the tree's appearance, while its blaze of fiery berries set in thick clusters against the deep green background, made men see in it a beautiful illustration of one of their favourite types. In old Cornwall it was once known as 'Aunt' Mary's Tree, the title of Modryb Marya being given to it, according to the late Mr. Hawker of Moorwinstow, in tender respect for the Mother of God. He explains that the household names uncle and aunt were uttered and used in the west country in the same manner as they are in many countries in the East to this day, not as phrases of kindred, but as words of kindly greeting and regard, and that it was this that suggested the name of Modryb Marya for Mary on the Tamar side. In his 'Cornish Ballads,' Mr. Hawker has written a very charming carol to the Holly, 'the tree with the bleeding breast' as he calls it, and there are many old ones to be found in praise of this favourite; its symbolism, and its affording food and shelter for the birds in winter, apart from its beauty, made it to be loved by the poets, and affection for it found vent in such old proverbial sayings as—

'Whosoever agaynst Holly do crye
In a lepe shall he hang full hye.
Whosoever agaynst Holly do sing
He may wepe and his hands wring.'

In France it is known as Epine de Christ; in Germany as Christdorn, and in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark as the same; but there are some other names which exist for it in France that need explanation. It is very widely known as Le grand Pardon, and in Provence as Garrus de la Santo Baumo: the latter title refers, we suppose, to its growing at the famous convent of the Holy Cave of St. Mary Magdalene between Toulon and Marseilles, but whether the former be connected with this place of pilgrimage or the Christmas festival we cannot be sure.

If the Holly-tree emblem of the Burning Bush recalled to men's minds the Maiden Mother, the sharp crisping of its leaves also told them of the spiny crown that awaited that Mother's Son, and hence we find Nemnich in his 'Nomenclator' speaking of it as 'Christdorn, etc., soll sie heissen, weil die Dornenkrone des Heilandes daraus bestanden haben soll auch hat man sie für den Dornbusch, aus welchem Gott mit Moses sprach, halten wollen.' In parts of Denmark also we learn that it is known as Kristi-tvon-Krön or Krón-tórn, and probably to them the red berries were the beads of Blood that came from the Saviour's brow.

The Wild Myrtle, Box Holly, or Butcher's Broom, as the *Ruscus aculeatus* is variously styled, is as popular in use at the Nativity in southern Europe as the *Ilex aquifolium* is with us. It is one of the shrubs always to be seen employed in Spain and Italy, and to be found near the Christmas cribs or pietas of every household. It grows abundantly in our copses and hedgerows in England, and, together with other varieties, such as the *Ruscus racemosus* or Alexandrian Laurel, should be more cultivated in our gardens to furnish us with winter greenery of a beautiful as well as of an interesting character. Its bright scarlet berries make it attractive; but it also possesses the singular property of giving off an inflammable gas which is said to

be ignitable under certain conditions of the atmosphere, and this made it a very remarkable representative of the Burning Bush. In Provençal France it is especially known as Calendau or 'Christmas,' just in the same way as our Holly is in England, while in the Balearic Isles its fruit is spoken of as Ciceretas del Bon Pastor, which may have some reference to our Lord's title or to the Bethlehem shepherds. These trees are often to be found in Lancashire and north country cottage gardens, where they are called 'Jerusalem Thorns,' and have usually connected with them there the story of the Glastonbury Thorn, being said to flower upon the night of the Saviour's birth.

A favourite old plant, once to be found in most old garden plots where soil was light and dry, was the Wild Dittany or Fraxinella (*Dictamnus*), which is still known to our peasantry as the Burning Bush. It is a native of the Taurus and Caucasus, but seems to have been introduced into England for a considerable length of time, and is certainly deserving of a place in every flower enclosure. Its erect stems form pleasant masses of foliage, rising about two feet, and its racemes of purplish or white flowers appear about midsummer. When these dense tufts of blossom have faded the seed-vessels are found to be eminently aromatic and resinous, and the whole plant exhales an aetheric vapour, so powerful that if a candle be brought near to it the air around will burst into flame of greater or less intensity, and thus afford a remarkable illustration of its name.

At the convent upon Mount Sinai and in the East generally, the species of Acacia known as the *Acacia seneh* is identified with the real Bush of Fire, and it is curious to mark how the traditions of the East connected with the Acacias have in the West become allied to the Hawthorns. In this instance we find in France that the Pink Hawthorn (*Crataegus pyracantha*) is known as L'Arbre de Moïse or Buisson ardent, and in Cheshire as the

Egyptian Thorn; and its thickly powdered head of the exquisite pink blossom renders the name singularly appropriate. For the same reason we find the title of Buisson ardent conveyed to the Mauritius where the rosy-flowered *Ixora* is so known, and probably many other modern examples might be found.

Mateo de Cerezo painted a picture for the Franciscan Friars of Valladolid, in which he placed the Blessed Virgin seated in a cherry-tree: it may have been as a play upon his own name, and to indicate the place he desired his patroness to occupy in his heart, but there is a species of Cherry (*Cerasus pyracantha*) known as the Burning Bush, and perhaps the artist united both meanings in one. Certainly, if those who employ the device will place her figure in clustered Holly, pink Hawthorn, or wild Myrtle, they will not only have excellent subjects upon which to exercise their skill, but also prove in unity with the historic flora of christened folk.

Gideon's Fleece. There are very many similes to be found illustrating from botany the doctrine of the Virgin-motherhood of Mary, such as that of Aaron's Rod or the Mystical Almond, but since these belong more particularly to the flora relating to the Blessed Virgin, we have transferred them there. This one of Gideon's Fleece we retain since it occurs in the offices for the Nativity season; for, like the voices of sentinels giving the watchword around the ramparts of the Church of God, so do the antiphons sound the keynote of the Christmas thoughts that should possess our minds.

'Rorate coeli desuper et nubes pluant Justum' had commenced the Advent cries, and upon the eve of the Nativity the prophecy is heard, 'Orietur sicut Sol Salvator Mundi et descendet in uterum Virginis sicut imber super gramen.' Again upon the octave is sung 'Quando natus

es ineffabiliter ex Virgine tunc impletae sunt scripturae sicut pluvia in vellus descendisti.' The same reference is of frequent occurrence upon the festivals in Mary's honour, and to those of old time who loved the minor offices of the Church and recited the little Hours of the Virgin, this emblem of Gideon's Fleece must have been very familiar.

In the illustrated Speculums and Bibles, as well as in glass and other forms of graphic art, the Vellus Gideonis was of frequent occurrence, answering to the Annunciation or Nativity. The choice of Gideon to deliver Israel from the worship of Baal had so many points of similarity to the choice of Mary, that he was typical of her in several ways. The angelic salutation 'Dominus tecum' was addressed to both, and the humility of both was their distinguishing feature. 'Behold my family is the meanest in Manasses, and I the least in my father's house,' had its correspondence in 'He hath exalted the lowliness of His handmaiden.' Among the signs shown to confirm the weaker faith of Gideon was that of a fleece of wool spread upon the earth remaining dry while the dew made all around it moist, or moist while the earth was dry, and it was of such striking simplicity as a type of the Incarnation, that perhaps no parable can better bring it home to man's mind than this homely one of the fleece of Gideon. The Dew of Heaven (*Ros Coeli*) has become one of Mary's affectionate names, given to her as the spouse of the Holy Spirit, for as the dew comes down to earth silently from heaven, and returns thither again, leaving the effect of its presence in fresh strength and beauty of life, causing by its coming no physical change or detriment, neither staining nor tainting, so, according to the dogma of the Incarnation, was the conception and birth of our Blessed Lord.

They, of former days, found a very beautiful illustration

of this profound mystery in one of the humble plants of their moorlands, viz. the Sun-dew or *Drosera*, all of whose hardy species, save one, are natives of Britain. Few plants present a more lovely type of Christian doctrine, or are more interesting in themselves. Upon the hottest feast of the Assumption, when all the herbage around is dry and panting and no rain or dew has refreshed the earth, the Drosera may be seen sparkling with clear, viscid globules that ornament the margin and surface of its leaves so that it forms a striking memorial of the Scripture analogy. Its star of red and green lies flat upon the ground, its green foliage being covered with dense glandular hairs or bristles in which a red speck is noticeable, and upon their tip is a dewlike bead of moisture. It is still called 'Gideon' in various parts of Germany, or 'Heaven's Dew' in Denmark, and in this latter country they have the pretty saying that the little fleece is wet with Mary's tears, hence both there and in Scandinavia we find for it the name of Mariae oïontaare, or the dialectic equivalent. The redness in the downy surface suggested the title we sometimes meet with in the Fatherland of Jungfern blüthe, while the shape of its leaves has induced the children to call them Unseres Herrn Gottes Löffel.

It is characteristic of the art of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to be marked by exquisite taste and poetic feeling, and we do certainly think that some of these parables of Christian doctrine from their waysides and moorlands are singularly redolent of the faith, poetry, and refinement of those ages; and perhaps few of these dedications can surpass that of the Drosera or Ros Solis.

An old fifteenth-century carol upon the Incarnation sings in its quaint way as follows:

'He came all so still,
There His Mother was
As Dew in April
That falleth on the grass.

'He came all so still
To His Mother's Bower,
As Dew in April
That falleth on the flower.

'He came all so still,
There His Mother lay
As Dew in April
That falleth on the spray.

'Mother and Maiden
Was never none but she,
Well may such a Lady
God's Mother be.'

Filius ante Patrem. Before we pass away from these types and parables from Nature of our Lord's Humanity we ought to mention that it is not improbable that those plants which bear the above title of Son-before-the-Father became allied in Christian thought with the position of St. Joseph in relation to our Blessed Lord. Thus we find the Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara et fragrans*) known in England, Italy, etc., as the Filius ante Patrem, and also in Walloon Hieppe di Sain Joseph, or as Marie licko in Bohemia. Its flowers appear on a short stem before the leaf is out, contrary to the usual evolution of the organs of herbaceous plants. There are also several species of Autumnal Crocus which have been called Filius ante Patrem (such as the *Crocus nudiflorus*, *medius*, and *iridiflorus*) from their flowering about September or October, but only producing their leaves in the following spring. The seed-vessel, which has remained underground since the preceding autumn, then appears, and, growing with the leaves, ripens in June. Thus the seed comes before the parent flower; and what appears as the flower-stalk is really only the tube of the corolla, as in the ordinary spring crocus. The ancients used the name of Son-before-the-Father for the Common Cudweed or *Gnaphalium Germanicum*, Huds., because the branches bearing the lower

and younger heads of flower become elongated and overtop the older and original terminal heads. This was made a type of undutiful children behaving irreverently to parents. From this point of view they styled it Herba Impia, 'Quoniam liberi super parentem excellant' (Plin., 'Nat. Hist.' xxiv. 113); this title of Filius ante Patrem, although of classic origin, had no doubt a very different significance to Christian eyes, but we do not think it was of frequent use.

CRADLE-GRASSES

Mentha viridis.
Mentha Pulegium.
Thymus Serpillum.
Sonchus oleraceus.
Galium verum.
Medicago sativa, etc.
Trifolium stellatum.
Hedysarum.
Onobrychis sativa.
Hierochloe borealis.
Holcus odoratus.

Connected with holy Infancy.

Myosotis.
Viola tricolor.
Geranium moschatum.
Fumaria.
Verbascum Thapsus.
Echium.
Gymnadenia conopsea.

CRADLE-GRASSES

'O praesepe splendidum in quo non solum jacuit foenum animalium sed Cibus inventus est Angelorum.'

A VERY pretty custom has grown up since the thirteenth century of having in the churches and homes of the people at Christmas-time representations of the Bethlehem crib. Within a grotto or shed the Holy Child lies in a cattle stall; St. Joseph stands near with a lantern or taper in his hand, indicative of the midnight darkness when the 'Light of the World' was born; the Blessed Mother is there too, while an ox and an ass are in the background. The shepherds are represented as drawing near in various attitudes of respectful wonder, clad in their sheepskin coats; one perhaps plays upon his pastoral pipe and another upon his cornemusa, to soothe the tearful Mother and cheer the desolate scene, while a third lays a fleece as his offering at the foot of the crib. Their dog, which in Spain they name Melampo, accompanies them, and Madelon, the shepherd-maid, is presenting a wreath of Christmas roses. A wren or two doves are also sometimes to be seen upon the rafters, as connected with the Bethlehem grotto, while as the Epiphany comes round a lighted star is suspended over the place, and lastly, the gorgeous group of the Magian sages is added, and treated with every kind of imagined pomp, beauty, and variety of detail.

In Italy, Spain, France, and elsewhere these presepi,

nascimenti, or crèches were constructed often with great magnificence, and prominent artists were employed both for modelling and designing the groups or painting the scenery. Political and social disturbances have deprived the Church in Europe of a great portion of her ecclesiastical art treasures, but we may see oftentimes in the museums exquisitely executed examples of these groups, which now are replaced in the churches by French plaster. There are several collections of these figures, designed and carved by celebrated craftsmen, preserved in private galleries in Naples, and in the museum that now occupies the old Carthusian monastery of San Martino in that city there is a very fine one, which is still a constant object of attraction and popular delight among the peasantry. It is said that the manufacture of these stable groups in France is one of the most prosperous of that country's industries, while Germany is also a powerful competitor in their production. There are signs of a returning desire that these tableaux in the churches at least should once again be redeemed from the tawdriness into which most ecclesiastical art has fallen through the loss of the old models, the degradation of modern taste, and the evil search after cheapness; and in many places well-carved figures and appropriately painted scenery are replacing the plaster, pasteboard, wax, or even zinc that we frequently see employed. Many of these representations had regular endowments left to maintain them, and were rich in jewels and rare fabrics; those of the Santissimo Bambino at the Ara Coeli in Rome were most extensive. A century ago there was a special bequest left for the manger in the Church of Jesu Nuovo in Naples, and the scene used to occupy the space of two large chapels; and many others might be enumerated. It is the custom to place a figure of the little Saviour in the straw above the tabernacles in the churches for the priests' eyes to rest upon during this season, and it is to this that

Thomas Kirchmeyer (who wrote under the pseudonym of Naogeorgus) refers in 1559, when in his verses ridiculing Catholic practices he speaks of

> 'A woodden Childe in clowtes is on the aultar set,
> About the which both boyes and gyrles do daunce and trymly jet.'
> *Translated by Barnaby George*, 1570.

But it was not only in the churches that these groups were to be found; in every home, from palace to peasants' hut, they once were to be seen and the pathetic story was portrayed, and we have every reason to believe that in this custom England was no exception. We may even find traces of it still among the children's observances. On the Wolds of Yorkshire the little wassailers may be met with going from farmhouse to parsonage, bearing in a small box a doll set in coloured papers and ribbons which they call their 'Milly,' or 'Miladi's box.' It was once a figure of the Ladye Mary with her Baby in her arms, and is still kept covered with a handkerchief which is only raised while the little petitioners sing their song of wassail, in which they bid the master to 'call up the butler of the house, put on his golden ring,' and reward their exertion. About Leeds and its neighbourhood they carry a bower of Holly and evergreens with two figures inside, known there as a 'Wesley-bob' or 'Milly-box,' as on the Wolds. A writer in the 'Folklore' journal for December 1898 (p. 365), speaking of some Lincolnshire customs, relates that 'some years after the beginning of the nineteenth century a woman from Harpswell or Hemswell used to carry round a "crib" at Christmas time. This crib contained dolls representing the Infant Saviour, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph. In the north-east of the county the practice is still sometimes observed, but there the small chest or basket in which the doll or dolls lie is misnamed the *Vessel-cup*, no doubt because a wassail-bowl filled with spiced ale was also borne from door to door fifty years since or even later.' The colliers

of Llwynymaen, two miles from Oswestry, were wont to visit the houses in the town at this season, carrying a little clay grotto with a light inside; about Hucknall-Torkard, in Nottinghamshire, they also had similar customs, and in many other parts of England this practice of having Christmas cribs lingered on. We have collected these together, and hope that others may be induced to note further examples of this custom, for it is fast becoming extinct, unfortunately, and has been disregarded by students of folklore generally. In every rural homestead in Derbyshire a 'kissing-bunch' was hung till recently in the house, formed of two crossed hoops entwined with greenery and enshrining two figures, once the Madonna and her Son, and beneath which the Pax was given as beneath the Mistletoe bough. All these seem tokens of English people having been in unison with other lands in having these crib scenes in their homes. About them the members of the household would gather morning and night and recite their family prayers, and sing those lullabies and cradle-songs overflowing with affection and homely allusions. The opening words of one of these, 'Lily of Nazareth, sleep upon my breast, My heart is Thy cradle,' etc., may have been written mindful of that name which Parkinson tells us the English and German women gave to the Martagon Lily (*Lilium Martagon*), while the hymn at Lauds upon Christmas Day was one among many other allusions to the straw-strewn crib—

'Foeno jacere pertulit
Praesepe non abhorruit
Ex lacte modico pastus est
Per quem nec ales esurit.'

Hay and straw now form the chief component in this country of the fodder and bedding of our luxurious stables, but such do not exist elsewhere, far less in the East; the earnest thoughtfulness of our forefathers through-

out Europe desired that the herbage that filled their crèches should have a reason for its presence there; they sought out various fragrant plants and flowering grasses, downy seeds and soft mosses, such as might be found in the byre and stall of Bethlehem perchance, and about these their pious and pretty fancy played. The Holy Mother's name is connected with so extensive a flora, that it is only when we find some other distinctive sign — either in title or custom — that we are able to select particular examples from amongst her Bedstraws, and therefore many other cradle-grasses probably existed besides those we now enumerate.

'The Sage of Bethlehem' is the name still used in old-fashioned homes in Lincolnshire for the Garden or Spear Mint (*Mentha viridis*), and no doubt this marks it out as once having been their cradlewort, since these mints were favourite herbs for such use. All the mints were dedicated to the Ladye Marye, and this one was known generally in England, as Gerard tells us, as Our Lady's Mint, just as the equivalent title thereto is found for it in France, Germany, and Italy. In the last-named land, however, they select for use in lining their cribs another species, the smallest of our mints, the *Pulegium*, for which our name of Brotherwort seems especially significant at Christmas time. Its potent smell when bruised led to its being employed to strew the path of processions or the pavement of banqueting-halls, etc., before the days of carpets, and hence it was also known as 'Churchwort' or 'Bishopswort.' The Calabrian peasantry will never pass by a bed of its vagrant sweetness without rubbing its leaves and uttering an Ave in honour of the Incarnation, for they say—

'Chi scontra la mintuccia e non l'addora (odora),
Non vede Gesu Cristo quando muore.'

It blossoms with whorls of numerous purple and white

flowerets at the birthday of Mary in September, and Sicilian children tell you that it does so again upon the birthday of her Divine Son. Bagatta in his 'Admiranda Orbis' quotes from another the story 'that if the *Pulegium* be gathered upon the Feast of St. John the Baptist at day-break, and kept until the Nativity, it will dry up as nature demands; but that if it be placed upon the altar at which the first Mass is to be sung upon that night, the dry herb will revive.' It was the pretty fancy that just as the Forerunner of the Saviour recognised the presence of his Lord while both were unborn, so this little plant gathered upon St. John's Day would bear its witness to the Saviour's Nativity. It may be that there is some reference in the name of Brotherwort to St. John, who is so constantly present in pictures of the Holy Family, and with whom also other Crib plants are connected.

The old botanical name of Cunilago or Cradlewort for the Wild Thyme (*Thymus Serpillum*) is sufficiently distinctive of its use, while that more generally used for it of Sanctae Mariae lecti Stramen is frequent with the botanists of Germany, Denmark, Holland, etc. In Norway it is called Mutter Maries sengehalm, and the exquisite fragrance of this herb must readily have suggested its dedication. In Bohemia it is said to be known as Materina, and in Poland as Macierza duska, which is explained as the dear Mother's Love or Heart, as though in reference to Him who lay in the Bethlehem crib.

In Bologna and its vicinity it is usual to see their homely cribs overshadowed with a branch of the Wild Myrtle (*Ruscus*) of which we have already spoken under the types of the Incarnation, and filled with the white silky down found in the seed-vessel of the Milky Dashel (*Sonchus oleraceus*), which old Gerard speaks of as 'St. Maries seeds.' This is a kindred plant to the Mary Thistle

(*Carduus Marianus*), having, like it, deep green leaves covered with a marbling of white, caused, as it was said, by drops of the Holy Mother's milk falling upon one of its species. This tradition alone would make it appropriate to be used for the lining of their nascimenti; but when we know that these herbs grow in profusion about the Manger City, it becomes of increasing interest and value to sincere folk.

The pretty wayside flower (*Galium verum*) which is most generally known throughout England as Our Lady's Bedstraw, also bears the name in Sweden, etc., of the Cradle-grass or Vaggegras. It abounds upon our chalky soils, growing there luxuriantly, with its bright yellow, honey-scented flower, and comes into blossom at the Assumption, gladdening waste places with the mist of its golden beauty. In every part of Europe where it is to be found it bears the same dedication as in England; but besides that of Sweden, it is also known indifferently in the Eifel district of the Rhineland either as Mutter Gottesbettstroh or Herr Gottesbettstroh. Many are the virtues attributed to the pretty plant from its contact with the Christ Child and His blissful Mother; for it is said to possess the power of bringing especial comfort and refreshment when used as bedding, giving solace to the weary and travel-worn, and inducing sleep to those in pain. The legend of this Cradle-grass is that it was with the bracken fern and other herbage among the bedding in the cattle-stall of Bethlehem, and that when the Infant Jesus was laid within the crib, this was one of those that burst into flower and formed an aureole about His brow; hence, perhaps, comes another Swedish name for it of Barnskete, as though it made a hood for the Holy Child. As a mark of the Divine favour, the Galium became endowed not only with many virtues but with enriched beauty of colour, to make men honour and appreciate it

more, and its flowers, which had been white, became for the future all gold. In a picture of the Nativity by Nicholas Poussin we find this story illustrated; for he has painted its golden shower as receiving its gilding from the aurient rays that surround the sleeping Child. The bracken, however, was said to have been less ready to recognise its Creator, and since that time has never blossomed as once it did; but if you cut its stem into sections as Christmas time draws near, you will see inscribed upon its heart some symbol to tell you of its penitence and its presence in the manger. Either it bears the representation of the first Adam and first Eve on either side of the tree of the Fall in Eden, or else the initial letters of the Holy Name IHC or the Greek Chi, and thus it has obtained for itself the beautiful name in Germany of Jesus Cristwurz, or in Norway of Korsblom, and in Ireland of the Fern of God.

The legend of the flowering Cradle-grasses is also to be traced in the stories told of several different species of plants, all of which bear the name of the Holy Hay. The Latin Sanctum Foenum is more popularly familiar under the equivalent Greek form of Hierochloe or the French Sainfoin. Originally these terms seem to have been confined to several allied species of lucerne or clover which came from the East, known botanically as Medicagos, and now among the most useful of our artificial grasses. Their small trefoil leaf and bright yellow floweret were so valued by shepherd and herdsman for their stock that their wholesomeness was connected with their having been in the stall upon the Holy Night; there were also discovered in them quite wonderful memorials of their presence there; not only were they thought to have formed a coronal of beauty around the Head of the Holy Infant, but they also foretold how that Head was to be encircled by a Crown of Pain, for when the flowers have

faded and the seed has ripened, the vessel containing it is found to uncoil into a little spiny girdle forming a beautiful memorial in nature of the Crown of Thorns. For this reason with us in England, apparently in quite modern times, the Medicagos have become known as Calvary Clovers, and the name of Sainfoin or Sanctum Foenum seems to be forgotten, although in Buckinghamshire the *Lupulina* species is still thus known, just as the *Medicago sativa* is Helig Heu in Germany. In the latter country most of the closely allied species are also called Unser Frauen Hopfe or Hopfklee, and the *marina* especially has in Southern France the title of Erbo dou Pardoun, just as in the same district they speak of the Holly as Le Grand Pardon. These names we are unable to explain unless there be some reference to the indulgences attainable by the faithful at Christmas time, or it may be that there is a more local explanation to be found. It adds to our interest in these Medicagos or Holy Hays to know that they come to us from the Levant, and are to be found about Nazareth, as probably also around Bethlehem itself; while our name of Calvary Clover given to them of late years is another instance, like that of the Passion-flower in the sixteenth century, of the sympathy many minds find in the sacred imagery of the natural creation. It is probably in mistake for a Medicago, or from its close family likeness, that we find the name of Corona de Cristo for the Starry Trefoil (*Trefolium stellatum*) in the Balearic Isles, and many other titles for kindred species that connect both Mother and Son.

The name of Sainfoin is now botanically confined to the pea-flowered plants we know as the French Honeysuckle (*Hedysarum*) or Sainfoin (*Onobrychis sativa*), both of the same papilionaceous family, and, like the preceding Medicagos, of very great value in pastoral districts. That tireless beast of burthens, the ass, just as it is said to bear

the Cross upon its back in reference to its having shared in the first Palm Sunday procession, so is it reported to recognise the Onobrychis by braying whenever it approaches near to it because it was in its 'Master's Crib,' and from this habit the plant is accounted to receive its Greek name. They say in France that the Hedysarum is called a Holy Hay, because its rose-coloured spray of flowers burst into blossom when the Holy Child was laid upon its sere and dry stalks, recognising, like the Galium and Medicago, the Divinity of the Babe whose couch they formed; other herbage remained lifeless and unmoved, but these expanded their delicate little flowers, and spread out their dry leaves into a wreath or crown. The once silvery aureole of the Galium became the mist of gold with which we now are familiar, the Hedysarum flushed into the rose-colour it still retains, while the prophetic Medicagos unfolded their little trefoil leaves emblematic of the Trinity in Unity, and bore upon them a spot of Blood. In Eastern lands there is known a species of Hedysarum (*gyrans*) that seems endowed with perpetual motion, wearying neither night nor day, in sunshine or rain, to attract men's minds to the memory it would recall of the sacred scene at which some of its family were privileged to assist.

Still there are two more plants which have been included in the name of Holy Hays, and these are the sweet smelling, reedy grasses known as Hierochloe (*Hierochloe borealis* and *Holcus odoratus*). They are very rare in Britain, but have been found in a narrow mountain valley of Forfarshire. They are, however, so fragrant, that in Iceland and Scandinavia they were deemed in old days as suitable tributes of earth for the components of the bed of Mary and her Son, and known in those parts as Mary-grasses, while in Germany they are also dedicated to Unser Lieben Frauen. They were among the herbs once used to strew churches, to hang up in homes, or for

the careful housewives of northern lands to lay amongst the household linen in their presses.

There are, of course, many plants known as Mary's Bedstraw which we might include under this section, since what was the bed of the Mother must have been usually that of her Son, but we are not acquainted with any traditional stories or usage that ally them especially with the period with which we are dealing. We have therefore deferred to treat of these until we do so in the volume dedicated to the Flora of Mary. There are, however, a few other dedications that take the mind so directly to the Crib of Bethlehem, that we must include them here; for we have not yet exhausted the stores of tender memories that remain to us in these long after days, telling us of the piety and poetry of thought amongst the men of old time in their observation of the simplest weeds of their waysides. To them the Myosotis of their pools or moist places was either Les yeux de l'enfant Jesus, as in France, or in other lands those of His only earthly parent, a name which makes the English title for it of Forget-me-not an ejaculatory prayer. The Pansy or Herb Trinity (*Viola tricolor*) had, among other familiar titles, that in Germany of Jesuslein, or Jesusknäble blumchen, or of Kristiöje in Denmark, thus forming in itself a creed of the Incarnation if we recollect its universal name of Herba Stae. Trinitatis. In Sicily the Scented Geranium (*Geranium moschatum*) is still known as the Swaddling-clothes of our Lord, and its long-beaked fruit as the Madonna's Pins, just as in Spain they attributed all the fragrance of the Rose-Mary to having had hung upon its bush the little Saviour's baby-clothes. 'O felices panni quibus peccatorum sordes extersimus,' is the exclamation of an old devotional writer in contemplating the humility of the Nativity; and in Spain they would seem to have made that contemplation with a slender plant of the Fumitory (*Fumaria*) in their

hand, for in its lace-like foliage, which resembled the pañale of their own infants, they have seen Nature's memorial of the Pañalitos or Camisitas del niño Jesus, and in its little flowers His Zapaticos or shoes, while our own Dorset name for the same of 'God's little fingers and thumb' seems to connect this herb with that early period in His life on earth. The thick, woolly, and rough leaves of both the Great Mullein (*Verbascum*) and Bugloss (*Echium*), which are prominent at the end of the year, are still known to our Kentish peasantry by the name of 'Our Lord's Flannel,' by which no doubt they refer to the flannel swaddling-clothes of infant children, just as the Spaniards in the Fumaria refer to the lace or embroidery with which it is the custom in that land to cover them. So, too, at the winter season when turning over the ground they would meet with the white palmate tuber of the Aromatic Orchis (*Gymnadenia conopsea*) and its form and fragrance suggested the children's name for it in various parts of Germany of Die Jesushand, or Herr Gotteshändgen.

All this tender piety of thought when its expression takes the form of being addressed to the little Saviour of mankind seems far away from us to-day, yet these simple tokens of affection by simple folk in real and earnest days will not appear to be wanting in beauty, nor the words of 'Our Lady's Lullaby' be without a responsive chord in many hearts:—

'Lectum stravi Tibi soli,
Dormi, Nate bellule!
Stravi lectum foeno molli:
Dormi, mi animule!
Millies Tibi laudes canimus
Mille, Mille, Millies.

. . .

Ne quid desit, sternam rosis
Sternam foenum violis,
Pavimentum hyacinthis
Et praesepe liliis.
Millies Tibi laudes canimus
Mille, Mille, Millies.'

MARY'S MILKWORTS

Polypodium vulgare.
Cardamine pratensis, etc.
Ornithogalum pyramidale.
Sonchus oleraceus.
Scolymus hispanicus.
Carduus Marianus.
Euphorbia.
Sedum acre.
Arnica montana.
Orchis maculata.
Lamium maculatum, etc.
Nepeta cataria.
Pulmonaria.

MARY'S MILKWORTS

'O gloriosa virginum
Sublimis inter sidera.
Qui te creavit, Parvulum
Lactente nutris ubere.'—*Marye's Lauds.*

THE wise of old time sought to enforce upon the hearts of their children a realisation of the human as well as the divine nature in Jesus Christ, and few things bring home to the mind the reality of this in so arrestive a manner as the helpless dependency of the Holy Babe upon His creature for His sustenance and protection. That God had deigned to be nourished at a human mother's breast has gilded the natural with the radiance of a divine mystery, and conferred a sacredness upon that scene of a mother's love which few of us are unaccustomed to feel whenever we may witness a repetition of it. Pious minds turned from the Gospel narrative and the Divine Liturgy, and looked around them upon that 'green Bible' that lay open before them, written no less by the finger of God than that they already knew, but which awaited their study and interpretation, and in the growth of their hedgerows and meadows they found illustrations either in the virtues of some herb or the markings of others that spoke to them of this early period of the life of their Saviour.

There is a grotto at Bethlehem to which the Holy Family are said to have removed from the stable of the inn for

greater privacy and convenience, known as 'The Milk Grotto,' and it is remarkable for the extreme purity of the limestone in which it is hewn. Tradition has ever liked to record that this great fineness of the material rock was the response made by the inanimate stone when it received upon its surface some drops from the virginal breast of Mary; and pilgrims are wont to bring away with them from thence small tokens stamped in powdered limestone, many of which were preserved as relics, and often to be seen labelled Lac Beatae Mariae in such old church treasuries as remain undispersed.

Around this grotto and that of the Nativity at Bethlehem travellers must have also remarked how earth seemed to send up memorials to remind them of the same fact as did these little white tablets; for several herbs that are known throughout Europe as Mary's Milkworts are abundantly evident there, and may have been introduced to the West by crusading knight or humble palmer. There is the tradition that the grey powdery lichen that gathers about the roots of the common Polypody (*Polypodium vulg.*) came first from the Blessed Mother's milk having fallen to earth, and that from the stained soil arose this fern; it has been known since then as a Mary's fern or the Sweet Angelswort of Germany, Scandinavia, and France, or as the Golden Maiden-hair of Kent and Herefordshire. It is familiar to every one in country places, and near the home of Nazareth it may be found with its wealth of golden seeds upon it as commonly as in this land of ours. Around the same place, too, we may gather the small, insignificant, white-flowered Bitter-cress (*Cardamine hirsuta*), for whose prettier variety, C. pratensis, we have in Yorkshire the name of Our Lady's Milk-sile or stain, or that of La Vierge in France; so also the pyramidal Ornithogalum, many of whose family abound about the Manger City, is known in France as Epi de Lait de la Vierge, and both of these

dedications would seem to owe a similar origin to that of the Polypodium.

But these plants are not those most universally known, and there are others which when Christian matrons heard of their growing around the scenes of the birth and infancy of the Saviour would naturally be desired by them for cultivation within their own gardens. Pilgrims would tell how they had seen about their path as they trod the sacred soil, thistles of many kinds bearing foliage of a milk-stained green, and their hearers would promptly turn to their own Milky Dashels (*Sonchus oleraceus*) and connect them with Mary's loved name, or to the silver-blotched leafage of the Spanish Thistle (*Scolymus hispanicus*), known in that land as the Cardo Maria. There was one, however, which to the early botanists was especially popular as Lac Beatae Mariae, and which in every land is similarly connected, viz. our Milk Thistle, Virgin Mary's Milk Thistle, or the Blessed Thistle (*Carduus Marianus*); it is so strikingly handsome that it has won a place in most borders where fine-foliaged plants are to be seen. Its broad leaves are cut with infinite variety, and their deep and glistening green is covered with a white marbling and veining, telling how it gained the honour of its dedication. From Sweden to Italy, in every country of Europe where it is found, it is allied with the Mother of God; and in 1370 Louis, Duke of Bourbon, instituted an order of knighthood of which this was the badge, and entitled it 'Our Lady of the Thistle.' Like Mary at Bethlehem and Nazareth, so the Milk Thistle with most others of its kind dwells in rough and bare places; its bright purple thrums rising from the thistle-head at the season that recalls her visitation to St. Elizabeth, and bringing the ripe woolly seeds of its down in August as if to make the pillow for her tomb.

Many a plant once treasured in the monastic physic

gardens of Europe was known by the dedication of the Holy Mother's milk, from its yielding alleviating remedies for various ailments. In Devon and Somerset they are said to give the name of the Virgin Mary's Nipple to those Spurges (*Euphorbia*) noted for the milk-white sap that flows from them when plucked. The Stone-crop (*Sedum acre*), whose brilliant little flower is so conspicuous on roofs and walls about midsummer, clothing them with a cloth of gold, has the title of Unser Frauen Brostmen recorded by Toxites as belonging to it in the sixteenth century, and in France and Italy it is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, while in parts of Germany it is still Herr Gottskraut. So, too, the Arnica (*Arnica montana*) whose remedial worth we know so well as a lotion, is another much appreciated plant still to be found cultivated in many a peasant's garden in Germany where its utility is familiar; and from its milky sap affording a balm for bruises and breast troubles, it has become entitled Unser Frauen Melkkraut, Marientrank, or Mutterwurz. The spotted Palmate Orchis (*Orchis maculata*) and others of its genus afforded a gracious mucilage soothing in scorbutic and other affections; and among other associations with which the markings upon their leaves were united was that which gave the name we hear in Sweden of Jungfru Mariae Bröst, or as the early botanist Bauhin records it, Lac Beatae Mariae. The double tuberous root, one black and the other white, of this Orchis was generally known as the Palma Christi or Christ's Hand of Power, or often as Mary's Hand of Pity, and the dark one as that of the Devil; and from the observation of its habit, the Christian peasant drew a lesson as he pointed it out to his children, for, as old Culpepper says, 'when the one riseth and waxeth full, the other waxeth lank and perisheth,' and the one 'destroys and disannuls the virtue of the other, quite undoing what that doth.'

The Lamiums (*Lamium maculatum*, etc.) too, which grow in all waste places, as if Nature sought to make the most uncongenial-looking spots yield gifts precious to man, are so full of utility that to the herbarists of old they were known as Archangels, and the white markings upon their young leaves, especially noticeable in some species, were connected by them with the Mother's breast; hence they are still known in Italy about Piedmont as Latte de la Madonna. The Nep Catmint (*Nepeta cataria*) also of the same labiate order as the Lamium, is another wort of great remedial value, whose balm-like leaves when bruised, give forth a pungent aromatic smell; the hoariness of its stalk and foliage, whitened as if with the limestone powder of the Milk Grotto, led to its being known in Germany as Die Marienstein, Unser Frauenmintz, or Die Mariennessel.

But just as the Blessed Milk Thistle spoken of above is perhaps the most distinguished in appearance of these milkworts, so the Spotted Comfrey or Pulmonary (*Pulmonaria*) is the most renowned in virtue and popular legend. This vigorous and hardy plant thrives in every soil, and was once a familiar sight in every garden; it is a native of England and northern Europe, and in the byways of quiet rural life we may still hear it spoken of by such names as the Virgin Mary's Milkdrops or Tears, the Virgin Mary's Cowslip or Honeysuckle, the Cowslip of Bethlehem, Sage of Jerusalem, and in Wales Llaeth bron Mair or Mary's Breast Milk. These many titles for this herb are demonstrative of its extreme popularity, nor are they peculiar to this country, for the same dedications prevail as a rule in every land where it is found. In France and Belgium it is still L'Herbe au Lait du Nôtre Dame; in Germany, Unser lieben Frauen Melchkraut, and the same in Holland; in parts of Italy where it grows it is Erba della Madonna, and the connection with the Holy Land is

repeated in the French and Belgian Sauge de Bethléem or de Jérusalem.

Many variations of the same names exist, but these suffice to show how definite a place of regard the Pulmonary has held in the esteem of quiet folk in many lands. It gets the name of Cowslip from the flowers being somewhat like in form, and of Sage from its rough leaves, otherwise it is of a very different race of plants from these, and belongs to the Borage family. It is an herb of compact growth, forming thick tufts of foliage about a foot high, and attractive in shady places in the spring. It comes quite early in the year, but usually about St. Joseph's Day in March, from which it is christened Erba d' San Giusep in many districts of Italy, and Joseph and Mary in parts of England. Its leaves are handsomely blotched and speckled with white, and the flowers are of manifold shades of red and blue even in the individual plant, and are continually changing their hue.

The editors of the 'English Dialect Dictionary of Plant Names' received the following communication from a doctor at Salisbury in reference to this Comfrey. 'I had an old woman weeding in my garden, and proposed to her to turn out a plant or two of it, to which she strongly objected, and said, "Do ee know, sir, what they white spots be?" "No, I don't." "Why, they be the Virgin Mary's Milk! so don't ee turn 'em out, for it would be very unlucky!"' The Rev. Mr. Barnes also in his 'Dorset Dialect Glossary' quotes the following from a correspondent. 'At Osmington, and no doubt elsewhere in our county, there is a survival of a sweet, simple, old-world piece of folklore about the Spotted Liverwort [Lungwort]. The cottagers like to have it in their gardens, and call it "Maery's Tears." The legend is that the spots on the leaves are the marks of the tears shed by St. Mary after the Crucifixion. Further—

and this to me is a quite unknown tradition—her eyes were as blue as the fully opened flowers, and by weeping the eyelids became as red as the buds.' These two stories connected with the plant show how the old traditional lore lives on still, in spite of the indifference of most persons to its poetic charm, and both taken together make up the pleasant tale that once was told by many a mother to her child as she pointed to the leaves and flowers of the Spotted Comfrey. Let us conclude by re-telling it again in a less fragmentary manner. It was at Bethlehem or on the way to Jerusalem upon the first Candlemas Day, that the Holy Mother was resting by the roadside to give the nourishment of her breast to her Divine Child, and near by her grew a clump of the Comfrey. As she gazed down upon the wondrous Infant she clasped at her bosom, and reflected upon the humility of her God in condescending to be so weak and helpless, her woman's heart swelled with loving tenderness and the tears rose to her fair eyes, and the more she gazed and thought, the more she wept. We still say that the sympathy of flowers is felt in joy or sorrow, and in this instance the secret instinct of Nature was so moved that just as the flowers of the plant at her feet had become heaven's own blue in reflection of the Holy Mother's eyes, so they varied their hues and the young buds flushed pink as her eyelids grew red with weeping. When she moved her Baby from her breast some drops of milk fell upon the Comfrey's sage-like leaves, marking their verdure with their stain, and ever since this humble herb has borne upon it these bleached spots, telling to earnest eyes what it witnessed in far-off Jewry, and coming yearly at the season of the Holy Infancy with variegated foliage and changing buds to record its story.

THE VISITATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

Helleborus niger.
Ruscus aculeatus.
Globularia alypum.

THE VISITATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

The memory of the Bethlehem shepherds is revived in every scene of the Nativity, in the privilege once accorded to men of that calling to be our waits in this land, as they are still in Italy and Sicily, and by the name of *pastorale* given to the addresses made by little children before the Christmas cribs in many countries. It may be interesting to note that in the old mystery-plays, just as they gave the names of Madelon to the shepherd maiden, and Melampo to the dog, so Misael, Achael, Cyriacus, and Stephanus were usually bestowed upon the men; and Dr. Edersheim, in his interesting book upon 'The Temple,' suggests that they may have been officials of the Temple at Jerusalem, whose duty was the guarding of the sheep for the daily sacrifices. In that case the angels' message to them first of all mankind was an indication that this sacrifice was now at an end, that the Truth had come to abolish the Shadow, and that the Lamb of God was the fulfilment of all types of atonement.

Beyond the legend of the Christmas Roses (*Helleborus niger*) that were brought by the maid Madelon, and which we have already related, we do not know of any plant names that refer to the visit paid by these Bethlehem pastors; but it is not impossible that many of those which now are simply known as Shepherds' Burse and the like, may have borne some such allusion. The Box Holly (*Ruscus aculeatus*), called Ciceretas del Bon Pastor in

the Balearic Isles, and known in southern France as Calendau or Christmas, seems like the Erbo dou Bon Pastour (*Globularia alyssum*) in Provence, to be too definitely allied to the beautiful title of our Blessed Lord Himself for it to refer to these simple herdsmen of Judæa; but there may be dedications unknown to us, or which have escaped our notice, that should be attributed to them.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND GIVING OF THE HOLY NAME

Cuminum.
Fumaria.
Geranium moschatum.
Saxifraga cotyledon, umbrosa, etc.
Viola tricolor.
Tanacetum vulgare.
Pteris aquilina.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND GIVING OF THE HOLY NAME

Benedict xiv. remarked that artists almost invariably erred by representing the Circumcision as taking place in the Temple at Jerusalem, whereas it was a rite administered on the eighth day after the birth of the Child, probably taking place in the Cave of Bethlehem, and might be performed by St. Joseph or even by the Holy Mother herself. It was at the Circumcision that the Holy Name was formally given, and eastern tradition has the legend that at its bestowal all Nature showed its reverence, the trees bending their lofty summits and the herbs their heads in adoration; the Aspen, however, that rebel in the forest, was thought to have alone refused to tender its homage, and later on it was this tree that was said to have yielded its wood to form the Cross of its Creator. In German Kalendars the first day of the year is marked by the Holy Name, and the second Sunday after the Epiphany is the Feast of the same.

In reference to the rite to which the Infant Saviour was subjected, we may mention that the herb Cummin (*Cuminum*), mixed with wine, was that used by the Jews as a styptic. It almost seems as if in the name of Sangre de Cristo, together with that of Pañalitos (or Swaddling-bands) del niño Jesus, which they have in Spain for the rosy-flowered Fumitories (*Fumaria*), they had sought to associate the memorial of this first shedding of the Saviour's Blood with this plant. In like manner the

species of Sweet-scented Geranium (*Geranium moschatum*), with leaves bearing spots as if stained by blood, is known in Sicily not only as Pannizzeddi di Nostru Signuri, but also as Pannizzeddi stizziati di Sangu, and this alliance of names seems to allow us to place them under the above heading as related to the Circumcision.

With regard to the giving of the Holy Name there are several points that need our consideration; many herbs bear the title of God Almighty, Our Lord, or Christ, but only a very few carry that of Jesus. It should be recollected that this name which we usually say means Saviour, is of far more mysterious significance than this simple interpretation conveys; literally, it is said to translate from its Hebrew equivalent 'JAH is Salvation,' and since it was given by the Archangel Gabriel as God's messenger, it was not a name of ordinary choice. This word JAH was not a name but a symbol, and represented the incommunicable name of God portrayed in Hebrew by four letters or signs, called the sacred Tetragrammaton; out of reverence it was never pronounced by the Jews, and hence its true sound is quite unknown and has been entirely lost. Whenever a reader of the Sacred Scriptures came to this symbol he employed as a substitute the word Adonai, and we have now the word Jehovah for the ineffable name, which, although a word 'unknown to all the ancients, whether Jews or Christians,' as the note to the Douai translation (Ex. vi. 3) says, was one formed by adding the Hebrew vowel-points of Adonai to this mystic JAH. It would seem that it was of divine authority that our Lord was to bear the shadow of the title of the Blessed Trinity in this very name of Jesus.

There is only one kind of plant that we have met with as bearing the name of Jehovah, and this was probably given in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, while its use

is only found existing in Germany, Denmark, and Switzerland. The species of Saxifrages known as cotyledon, umbrosa, etc., are all called in these lands Jehovah-blümchen, -blümli, or -blomst; but why they should bear so tremendous a title we cannot tell. Perhaps the most beautiful symbol of the mystery contained in this Holy Name of Jesus is the combination of titles for the Pansy (*Viola tricolor*), which, while bearing the dedication of Flos or Viola Sanctae Trinitatis amongst all ancient botanists throughout Europe, is also Jesus-knäbelkraut, Jesus-lein, or Jesus-blümchen in Germany, names which seem to connect it with the naming of the Holy Child. The connection came not only from the form of the flower and the variety of the colour of its petals, but also from its value in herbal medicine for asthma, pleurisy, epilepsy, and other complaints, wherein its power was allied to the virtue attributed to the Holy Name of God Incarnate.

Another herb known in Austria pre-eminently as Die Jesus-wurz, is the Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), one that is seldom absent from any old garden in any land, for apart from the exquisite delicacy of its foliage it was of much domestic utility. Our modern eyes are so concentrated upon the blossoming part of a plant that we are, as in most things, at the very antipodes of earnest mediæval thought. Then, and with all the early botanists, the flower was far less thought of and the herb was appreciated primarily for its virtues and significance. The Tansy has not an attractive flower; like Him whose name it bore, it is humble and lowly, but its leafage is amongst the most beautiful in Nature. The name Tansy is said to be from the Greek Athanasia or Immortality, for the blossoms, though simple, do not easily wither away; the leaves too were employed in that old Easter-dish called Tansy pudding, now grown obsolete and seldom seen but at corporate feasts; some say they were used in memory of the 'bitter herbs' of the

Paschal supper, but others think as significant of the immortality and eternal life purchased by Him whose name the herb carried. Its fragrant leaf also afforded a spring tonic and cordial of much esteem when such were sought for in the garden rather than at the druggist's store, and it thus became known as 'Herba Sanctae Mariae,' being named in honour of her as man's most powerful intercessor with the Good Physician Himself.

We have already under our Cradle-grasses made mention of how the Bracken fern (*Pteris aquilina*) was the Jesus Christwurz of Germany and Switzerland, from its having been in the Bethlehem stable at the Nativity and bearing upon its cut stem the sacrosanct Name or the sign of the Son of Man. In Normandy and Brittany the shepherds may be found making their pasture-ground crosses protective to themselves and their flocks, out of this fern's ribs, often threading upon it the purple flowers of the Digitalis, known to them as Les Doigtiers de Nôtre Dame, to enhance its potency. Then there was the all-important use of Bracken in olden time as an antidote to those omnipresent witches and other evil spirits who detested the sight of the waving frond whose heart bore the All-holy Name inscribed upon it, and throughout Europe its presence was needful upon the mysterious Eve of St. John to keep such troublesome persons at bay. Even last year in Provence they covered their Midsummer Eve bonfire with this fern, and before lighting it the priest came with holy water to bless it and their merry-making. The old masons of our churches in Norman days often carved the unfolding fronds of the Fern of God upon the capitals of their stout pillars, and we may see them employed, for instance, in the crypt of York Minster (1171), or in St. Peter's, Northampton, to tell to ages to come the love of the old architects for this Jesus Christ-wort.

CANDLEMAS, OR THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

The Field of Peas.
Pistachia Terebinthus.
Galanthus nivalis.
Saponaria officinalis.
Lychnis dioica and coronaria.
Primula veris.
Verbascum Thapsus.
Malva moschata, etc.
Althaea rosea.

CANDLEMAS, OR THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

Candlemas Day, as this is popularly called, combines a festival for both Mother and Son, both fulfilling obediently the requirements of the Mosaic law although the spirit of that law did not require it of them, for this Son was Himself the Lord to whom all first-born sons were offered, and this Mother knew no stain that needed purification. The Greeks call the day the Feast of Hypapantes, from the meeting between the Saviour, the high-priest Simeon, and Anna the prophetess. At that interview the old man chanted the first *Nunc dimittis*, and then turning to Mary foretold, amid her joyous sense of Motherhood, the dolours that were to rend her heart, while St. Anna too repeated her Credo 'to all that looked for the Redemption.'

The Holy Family had come up from Bethlehem, St. Joseph, no doubt, bearing upon his arm the usual basket of Osier (*Salix viminalis*) containing the two doves, the first-fruits offering of the poor; and it has been prettily remarked that at the Presentation was tendered the tribute of the two estates of men—the rich and the poor—for Mary bore in her arms the Agnus Dei whose emblem was the lamb offered by the former.

To this journey from Bethlehem probably belongs a legend told of a waste spot upon the roadside between the

two cities known as the Field of Peas, although nothing but rock is now visible, nor is it ever able to be cultivated. A Somersetshire bucolic proverb says: 'At Candlemas waddle (*i.e.* moon-waning) sow peas and beans,' and it was as the holy wayfarers were passing by this now barren space, then covered with soil, that in gentle courtesy the Virgin Mother spake to the husbandman engaged upon it, and in friendly interest asked him what seed it might be that he was so busily scattering. The boorish peasant only repaid her fair gentleness with sullen insult, and rudely answered that he was sowing stones. 'Then you shall reap stones in return,' was the quiet reply, and the God of Nature at the Mother's breast passed by unrecognised by that gross heart. In time, when the man came to seek the fruit of the peas that he had been really planting, and to gather his reward, he found to his dismay nothing but little stones, and never after has the spot produced anything different, and hence it is that to this day pilgrims along this Bethlehem road always stop at the 'Field of Peas,' as it is still called, and gather from its surface some of the pea-like nodules which the limestone surface renders to recall the first Candlemas Day. It is not improbable that this story originated many a dedication to St. Mary that we find among the papilionaceous or pea-bearing herbs.

On the same road they still point to a spot where once grew a Terebinth or Turpentine-tree (*Pistachia Terebinthus*) beneath which the tradition had been handed on of the Holy Family having rested, but in 1646 the owner of the property cut it down because his crops were injured by the passage of pilgrims to visit it. In Spain they call the Terebinth Arbol di Nuestra Senhora, in memory of this tree.

From Mary at her Purification having borne in her arms Him of whom Simeon spake as 'Lumen ad Revelationem Gentium,' came the custom of women bearing a lighted

taper at the pious ceremony of their 'churching' or blessing after child-birth, and from this prophecy of the patriarch at the first advent to His temple of Him who was the 'True Light that lighteth every man,' it is the custom for the faithful upon Candlemas Day to bear a lighted candle in the hand during the reading of gospels, creed, and canon. Christianity took the occasion of the processions made in pagan Rome about this time for the making of the rite redolent of itself; and thus the procession for the purification or blessing of the land became a memorial of the journey of the Holy Family to the temple from the City of David, and the tapers in hand recalled both the Mother and the Son. Few sights are more simply beautiful than that witnessed in the sombre light of this early February morning in some large church at home or abroad, when in the silence, as the mysterious words of sacrifice hurry on, one sees among the kneeling crowds the soft twinkling of innumerable tapers gradually extend over the whole church, and as the great bell tolls announcing that the Lord has once again come to His temple, taking the mind away to the scene of the first Candlemas. Our ancestors, with their lively faith and rural lives, loved this festival, and carried with them its recollection into their fields, and there they found that earth too was keeping it with them, and that in the aisles and naves of Nature's cathedral, in the meadows and woods, she too repeated the pageant they had witnessed in their churches that morning. As the pure flower of the Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*) rose among the thick grass and dotted their fields over with its white drooping bell, it was a remarkably striking reproduction of the picture they had beheld, and thus it became pre-eminently the flower of the feast. Although the name of Fair Maids of February, which we see given to these plants, is a modern one, yet February Lily is not, and that is to be found existing still; but in old England, as yet upon the Cotswold Hills of

Gloucestershire, it was as Candlemas Bells that they were known, like as in Denmark they are the Kyndelmisselilie. In France they are called Les Violettes or Les Carillons de Chandeleur, and another pretty title there is La Pucelle.

> ''Mid the coarse winter grasses, like points of pure light,
> You rise from the dark earth to give me delight—
> To speak to my cold heart of things out of sight.
> . . . . . .
> Sweet, sweet is the vision, the Mother and Child—
> Our Lady close clasping within her arms mild
> The fair Light of the World, the Babe undefiled.
> With doves, lighted candles, I see them go by,
> And bright is the glory that gleams from on high;
> Our Lord and His Mother! The angels draw nigh.
> . . . . . .
> Sweet flowers of Our Lady, sweet Candlemas Bells!
> I listen and listen—a mystery dwells
> In your white drooping petals, my Candlemas Bells.'—*C. H.*

There is a pretty legend that connects the Snowdrop with the first Eve, and tells how that it was winter in the world when our first parents were banished from the summer groves of Eden. Without its gates the biting, bitter winds were blowing, and hard frost held the earth in its remorseless grasp; as if marking with the obsequies of sorrow the advent into the world of death through sin, all Nature was shrouded in a pall by the thickly falling snow. No flowers were there to tender their consolation; no green of hope was visible, nor leaf on tree to shelter the guilty pair, and only the spots where their footfalls fell were left uncovered by the wreathing storm, as if their touch had scorched the very soil and left it accursed. Terrified at a desolation never before even conceivable to one whose days had been passed in the delectable groves of the garden of delights, Eve's heart was nigh breaking with anguish, and her grief inconsolable. In mercy the God of Justice sent His angel to revive her hope; he spoke many gracious words of promise, and pointing to where her tears of penitence had fallen, showed her that from them had sprung a little plant bearing a tear-drop for its blossom.

Other versions of the legend state that he caught a falling snowflake, which immediately became this flower, and thence was called the Snowdrop, and saying—

> 'This is an earnest, Eve, to thee
> That sun and summer soon shall be,'

he straightway winged his flight back to Heaven. Where he had stood a number of little buds were ringing their silvery bells, telling of the coming of a second Eve, by whose obedience He who should destroy Sin and Death would come to earth.

Perhaps it is with some reference to the lection at the Candlemass where the words occur, 'Ipse enim quasi ignis conflans et quasi Herba Fullonum' (Malachi iij.), that the Fuller's Herb or Soapwort Gentian (*Saponaria officinalis*) is known in France as L'Oeillet de Dieu, a name borne also by many other plants of the same Lychnis family. The Rose Campion (*Lychnis coronaria* and *Dioica*) is the Candelaria of Spain and Portugal, and has other dedications in many lands, such as Mary's Rose, God's Pink, Christ's Eyes, etc.; the White Campion also is La Chandelle de Nôtre Dame in France, as well as bearing the above-mentioned titles. But these are all summer memories of Candlemas Day. There can be no doubt, however, that our north country name of Our Lady's Candlestick for the Cowslip (*Primula veris*) was a timely dedication to Candlemas week; and if the same cannot be said of the Verbascums, whose strikingly soaring rod of blossom appears in August, yet still they are evidently allied to the memory of the same feast. Both the Great and White Mulleins (*Verbascum Thapsus*, etc.) bore the old botanical title of Candelaria. They are both very remarkable and stately plants, rising from three feet to five feet in height, with a terminal spike of flower which is usually yellow, but sometimes white. In Ireland they are known as the Virgin Mary's Candle, and among the Gaels of that country and of Scotland as Cuineal

Mhuire or Mary's Taper; in France and Belgium, Le Cierge de Nôtre Dame or La Chandelier de la Vierge; in Spain, Candelara; about Rome, Luminarea Dominului; and in Germany as Frauenkerze or Marienkerzen; and in England, Mr. Folkard alleges that the name of Candle-week flower is to be found. This is a pretty conclusive list of authorities for the placing this summer flower among those of the Candlemas week, and we cannot but think that its lofty stem must have been preserved during the winter to be smeared with grease and employed as a torch in the procession at that time, as also, perhaps, for the Mary's Taper at Christmas.

There is still one more memorial from among the flowers of this first entry of our Lord into His Temple, and that is in connection with the aged Simeon, who, taking the Holy Child in his arms, sang the first *Nunc dimittis.* In the old herbals, Herba Sti. Symeonis is a name given to several of the Mallows (*Malva moschata*, etc.), an order of plants destitute of all noxious properties and abounding in utility for the pharmacist. The handsome Vervain Mallow (*Alcaea rosea*), a species of the same family, is known in Spain as Varitas de David or Rod of David, it is also there the Herba de San Simon, as in France it is L'Herbe de St. Symeon, in Denmark St. Simonsurt, and similarly in Sweden; while in Germany it remains Simeonskraut or Simonswurzel. There can be little doubt that our name for the same of Hollyhock or Holyhocke (Grete Herball, 1526) is not a corruption of cauli-hock, as has been suggested, but is in reference to the sacred associations connected with this handsome flowering stem; perhaps in more southern lands it may be seen later in the year, and the feasts of St. Symeon (Oct. 8), and St. Simon and Jude (Oct. 28), may be marked by these blossoming shrubs giving the last farewell to summer's beauty.

THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS AND THE BETHLEHEM STAR

Pyrus communis.
Juniperus Sabina.
Circaea Lutetiana.
Ornithogalum umbellatum, luteum, etc.
Poinsettia.
Stellaria Holostea.
Tragopodon porrifolius and pratensis.
Centaurea Calcitrapa.
Hypoxis decumbens.
Aster grandiflorus.
Polygonatum multiflorum.
Hypericum Ascyrum.

THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS AND THE BETHLEHEM STAR

If the men of the moyen age commemorated with such thoughtful exactitude every detail in the life at Bethlehem, it is little likely that they omitted from the Scripture History they created among the flowers of their fields so marked a scene as that of the Adoration of the Kings, yet beyond the name of Dreykonigsbaum in Germany for a species of Pear (*Pyrus communis*), we are unable to find any sure memorial of them. The Italian name Cipresso de' Maghi is to be heard given to the Juniper (*Juniperus Sabina*), and Erba de' Maghi to the Enchanters' Nightshade (*Circaea Lutetiana*), but we cannot be confident that they refer to the Oriental sages. It may be that in the great number of plants whose names are now abbreviated to the simple Kings' Cup, Staff, etc., the original form was the Three Kings, the same process of omission having taken place as we find in many dedications to the Blessed Virgin, where Our Lady or Lady's has become ladies; in this latter case the change is easily traced, but in that of the Kings we do not yet know of a single instance. It is the more remarkable since in Germany and Austria, where plant names are most abundant, these eastern patriarchs were held in very marked popular regard: the great cathedral of Cologne was erected to receive their relics, their figures following the star was frequently employed as a dial gnomon or church vane, and might be seen

along the banks of the Rhine, down which river their remains were brought from Milan; the great stars in Orion's belt were christened the Three Kings, and are still so called in Provençal France, and their names or initials were continually inscribed upon the doorposts of German houses. England was scarcely behind other lands in this devotion to them, and the sign or name of the Three Kings or Crowns is still frequently to be met with, while their heraldic insignia may be seen repeatedly upon ancient armorial shields, from those of Oxford University to those of Portsmouth town. In every land the domestic festivities at their feast were as great as those upon the Nativity, and even still continue, so that we cannot but think that there must be a flora relating to them that has yet to be gathered, but to which we regret we cannot at present contribute.

But if we cannot do much towards placing the Three Kings in our Bethlehem garden, we can easily establish there the Star that led them thither and stood sentinel 'over the place where the young Child lay.' Our most popularly known memorial of this is the Ornithogalum (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*, *luteum*, etc.), which both in Germany and England is called the Star of Bethlehem, but in France and Italy they have prettily associated it with the Tears of Mary, as if these fair little flowers had sprung up as the Mother wept at the contrast of the poverty of the cattle-shed and the infinite majesty of its occupant when she held her divine Child to receive the homage of these first apostles of the Gentile world. This flower is the more welcome and delightful to us when we know that it is abundant upon the Judæan hills, along whose tracks these Sabæan seekers came, and that its corymbs of pure enamelled blossoms grow in thick luxuriance about the Manger City. Indeed, it is most probable that we owe its presence here in England

and in Europe to its having been brought by pilgrim and crusader from the Holy Land; for they would naturally treasure its bulb during the long march across the Continent in the hope that they might rejoice their far western homes with a flower that seemed to perpetuate on the spot the scene of the Epiphany. Mrs. Calcott, in her 'Scripture Herbal,' says that she never saw so many of these flowers as in the Campo Santo at Pisa, and the cause she assigned, with every probability of correctness, was that when this cemetery was being made, every Pisan ship returning from the East brought home as ballast a tribute of soil from the Holy Land, until there was sufficient to cover the original surface to a great depth, and that in this way the bulbs were conveyed.

A far more splendid type of the Bedlam Star than the simple flower we have just spoken of is the Poinsettia, the Flower of the Holy Night in Spain, one of the most striking floral emblems of a sacred story. The Flor de Noche-buena, as a plant, is now well known, its crimson star of flaming leaves is frequent as a winter decoration, although its memory of the Epiphany may be unfamiliar. It may be seen growing in the open gardens of Cairo, in the land of the Flight from Bethlehem, as in those of southern Europe, bringing a flush of glorious colour to gladden the eye and arrest the thoughts, and take the mind to the Cradle of Bethlehem as did the heavenly guide sent to the eastern Kings. It is one of Nature's most beautiful types for the Christmas time, and like Holly, Mistletoe, Rose-Mary, Hellebore, and Milk Thistle, would speak to the thoughtful eye and mind with far more lasting pleasure than do our usual hothouse nurslings which are sought to afford only sensuous satisfactions for the moment.

In every land many of those herbs known as Starworts probably had the more precise dedication of Bethlehem

Star, but the star-form is so continually repeated in the floral world that it may very easily have not been so, still we find many others besides the two more prominent ones we have already recorded. In the West of England they know the Greater Stitchwort or Stellary (*Stellaria Holostea*) as the Star of Bethlehem, and all its species might be so named, for it is not unlike the Ornithogalum in flower, although its starry blossoms and gold-dusted stamens do not appear before Whitsuntyde; so, too, the same name is often heard for the species of Cerastium called 'Snow-in-Summer' by gardeners, while the flower of the Salsify (*Tragopodon porrifolius*), which Lyte tells us was known in his day as Star of Jerusalem, and that of the Yellow Goat's-beard (*T. pratensis*), have suggested the same dedication.

In the Madeiras the Star Thistle (*Centaurea calcitrapa*) is Cardo de Cristo, and the striking Carline Thistle (*Carlina acaulis*) forms a most lovely design for the embroiderer or painter as a natural emblem of the Epiphany Star. In the British West Indies their Star of Bethlehem flower is the Hypoxis (*decumbens*), while in North America the handsome purple flower of an Aster (*Grandiflorus*) is welcomed as the Christmas Starwort or Daisy of December.

In New York and other cities of the United States there may be seen in some of the palatial residences at Christmas a wreath of Holly hung in the window which when Epiphany comes is replaced by a large star, or else one is inserted within the Holly circle. It is probably a pretty custom brought from their native land by German or other settlers to their transatlantic homes, and long may it continue.

The mystic writers and symbolists had very many theories as to the shape under which the guiding-star appeared to the patriarchal fathers, and the graphic artists

often were wont to depict it under various shapes. Sometimes it took the form of a seraphic child with outstretched arms, at others of the cabalistic pentacle or five-pointed sign known as the Sigil of Solomon, or thirdly as the double interlaced triangular figure called the Shield or Protection of David. It is from this that we find the titles of Stella Domini or Stern des Herren recorded by Toxites in 1574, as belonging to a plant known throughout Europe as King Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum multiflorum*) which also was spoken of as Herba Triangulus or Die Triangel from the distinct figure of the corolla. So, too, in England the pentacled flower of the St. John's Wort or Hypericum Ascyrum is still known in quiet parts as the Bethlehem or Jerusalem Star as well as Solomon's Seal, since this loadstar of the Sabæan sages was deemed as mysterious as the cryptic sigil of the wisest of men.

CHILDERMAS, OR THE MASSACRE OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS

Polygonum.
Atriplex patula.
Clavaria digitata and coralloides.
Fumaria.

CHILDERMAS, OR THE MASSACRE OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS

The Childermas commemoration has become so overshadowed by our excessive concentration of effort upon Christmas Day that all proportion is lost out of the season's teaching, and instead of this being one of the most tenderly beautiful and interesting memorials in the train of the Saviour's Birthday it has become practically unnoticed. This was not the case when the Christian habit of life was followed, founded upon the Church's round of fast and festival, for the day then was observed by its own especial ritual, ecclesiastical and domestic. In the Eastern Churches they speak figuratively of the number of little children who were slain, taking the symbolic 'hundred and forty and four thousand' of the immaculate 'who follow the Lamb' as their guide, the words of the Apocalypse being those of the lection read upon this day in place of the Epistle, but of course it is not known what the number really was. On the day of commemorating these Primitiae Deo et Agno, the Christmas bells were rung half in mourning, half in joy, the eyes of joyful faith struggling to look through the human and natural tears of sorrow as they must ever do at the death of little children; the Alleluias and Gloria in excelsis of the Mass were unsung and the liturgy told again of 'Rachel weeping for her children,' of their beatification, and the escape

of the Saviour 'from the snare of the hunter.' From many a church tower in this land we may still hear the half-muffled peals of Childermas; at Churchdown, Woodchester, Dursley, Great Risington, and Ampney Crucis in Gloucestershire; Wells Cathedral, Leigh-upon-Mendip, Luccombe, and Selworthy in Somersetshire; Weobley, Dilwyn, and Ross in Herefordshire; Magdalen College, and Burton-on-the-Water in Oxfordshire, and in doubtless many other places they retain the old practice. At Evesham they are wont to follow the mournful peal with a joyous one to indicate the deliverance from Herod of the little Saviour, just as in the Church offices upon the octave day both the Gloria and Alleluia are again sung. At Childermas every child was wont to be ritually whipped with sufficient gentleness to mark in their memories the day's events, and many other simple domestic customs were observed. We may almost gauge the position any day held in the popular regard if we turn to Nature and see there what the men of old time found to remind them of the emotions of their mind. In the Franche Comté the noise heard on dark nights in late autumn like the questing of hounds in the air after their prey, was said to be the ruthless Herod, who was thought to be condemned to pursue through unending ages a phantom band that ever escaped him. In the north of England the same sound is popularly known as that of the Gabriel-hounds or Gabble-retchet, and it is thought to be caused by the southern migration of the bean-goose; the peculiar cry the flock utters is like a pack of beagles hunting, and highly suggestive of ideas of the supernatural. But it is to the herbs that man most turns to express the thoughts of his mind, and it is interesting to note that it is amongst the Christian descendants of the Gauls and Teutons that the dedications to the Holy Innocents are found, for it was by his fifteen hundred barbarian mercenaries of these nations, according to tradition, that Herod executed

his decree, and we find the herbal associations most prevalent in France and Germany that refer to the cruel slaughter.

In the Oriental Knotweeds (*Polygonum*) we have a rod that might very well remind one of those ritual whippings of which we have spoken, and we find the name Discipline or Scourge given to them, besides the distinctive one of Holy Innocents' Worts for our European species (*aviculare*, *hydropiper*, etc.). L'Herbe des Saints Innocents in France is often in Germany Sanct Innocents Kraut or Sanct Innocentijurt in Denmark, and the Herba Sancti Innocentij of Stephanus, Bauhin, and early botanists; but it seems more likely to have originally been in reference to the Festum SS. Innocentium than to the fifth-century Pope Innocent. Various species of the same plant bear also the name of Bloodworts, which refer to their power of staying hæmorrhages, while their spike of red or rose-tipped flowers and leaves like a lance-head would help to connect them with the martyrdom of the little children.

It is recorded by Josephus that Herod was banished to Lyons and eventually died in Spain, and a very striking memorial of Childermas is found retained in the department of Vienne in France, where the Halbert-leaved Orache (*Atriplex patula*) is still known as Hérode; its foliage is hastate or sword-shaped, deeply and irregularly toothed like an eastern weapon may often be seen, and it bears a purple stain upon its surface as of blood, all fitly reminding the beholder of the tetrarch's pitiless sword, while gathered in clusters amongst the leaves are groups of tender flowerets like children clustering together and shrinking in fear from a tyrant's blow. As if to enforce this lesson, they have also in the same land drawn a contrast between two species of the Clavaria, the coarseness of one (*digitata*) being to them Les Mains d'Hérode, while the delicacy of the other (*coralloides*) Les Mains de Jésus or La Main de Gloire.

We have already spoken of how the Fumitory (*Fumaria*) is allied to the infancy of the Saviour and seems especially to belong to the memory of His Circumcision, and in Spain, where Herod is said to have died, they also dedicated it to another event of the Holy Childhood which its rose-coloured flowers and growth might have suggested, and, like the Knotweeds elsewhere, so the Fumitory in the Peninsula has amongst its titles that of Herba dels Inocents.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Juniperus Sabina, communis, etc.
Corylus.
Ulmus montana.
Salix Babylonica.
Rosmarinus.
Triticum turgidum, etc.
Astragalus Clusij.
Rubus saxatilis.
Anastatica.
Lonicera periclymenum, etc.
Nepeta glechoma.
Veronica chamaedrys.
Saxifraga.
Potentilla.
Viburnum lantana.
Vitex Agnus Castus.
Lotus corniculatus.
Cypripedium calceolus.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

An almost unstudied period in the life of our Blessed Lord, like that also of His visits across the Jordan, is the Flight from Judæa and the residence in Egypt; yet it is one so full of interest when investigated upon its scene, and so abounding with suggestions for the ecclesiastical artist, that it would be impossible to exhaust its interest. We can but here record those trees, shrubs, and plants that have a connection therewith in the traditions that have come down to us. The road taken by the poor fugitives would be probably that across the hill-country of Judæa to Hebron, from thence to the coast, along which they would continue their journey south. It would be at least four hundred miles and take six or seven weeks. The perils of the way were not only from man and beast, but greater still from lack of water, food and shelter, and those acquainted with desert travelling can most acutely understand why the commemoration of the Flight was once included among the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary as it is still among the Seven Dolours of the Blessed Virgin.

Many are the stories of the dangers experienced on the road, some of them recorded in those very early writings known as the Non-canonical Gospels and others handed down by little else than tradition. Most of them have afforded motives of scenes in the mystery-plays, or been used by the Christian artists of earlier days in painting or sculpture. Such incidents as that of the Holy Family encountering a robber band of nomadic Arabs is an experi-

ence very likely to have occurred, and that one of these eventually became the penitent Desmas upon the cross was a very general belief. That the wild beasts of the arid wastes, more readily moved by instinct than man by his will, should recognise the divinity in the Holy Child is no marvel to those who have studied in the lives of His saints the effect of sanctity upon the brute creation, a fact embodied in many a classic legend of earlier days than those. They, too, who know the unwritten laws of desert life and what a breach of hospitality there means, and how to simple-minded peoples a solemnly pronounced malediction is felt to bear its penance from generation to generation; such persons will not be too ready to dismiss the possibility that there may be some truth in the tradition that the gypsies were a band of wandering marauders, upon whom a doom was laid for refusing to shelter the Holy Family.

Amongst the trees and herbs we find some which were thought to have given their concealment from the pursuing soldiery of Herod or afforded their shadow at the noonday heat, while others bowed their homage or tendered their fruit at the passage of their Maker in His weakness.

In many lands the Juniper (*Juniperus Sabina, communis*, etc.) is found at Carol-tyde as plentifully employed as the Holly is with us. In France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, etc., it is this tree's bough that hangs in every stable and byre, as well as near every crucifix and crib in the house. With us the common Juniper is only a shrub, yet quite large enough to afford an important and voiceful addition to those we already employ; but in more genial climes it grows to a tree frequently twenty feet in height. It has won its right to a place of honour at the season of the Holy Infancy from a legend that tells of Childermas and the Flight into Egypt, for at the massacre of the Bethlehem innocents the holy fugitives were hurrying along on their

way to the south closely pursued by Herod's mercenaries. They passed by fields of peas and flax and copses of broom, and the chick-peas and broom rustled and crackled around them and the flax bristled up, until, to the overstrained nerves of the poor Mother, each sound seemed as if the men of blood were upon them and the life of her Child was imperilled. The Madonna's Juniper Bush, as they call it in Sicily, was growing near the wayside, and recognising the danger of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, opened its thick branches and enclosed within its sheltering arbourage the Holy Family, forming a closed bower around them until their pursuers had passed by. Its gracious service was rewarded, they tell, by the precious virtues it then engendered for human ills, rendering it henceforth beloved by men and welcomed in the druggist's store; in the woods too it became for ever a sanctuary whereto all poor hunted things might fly for refuge from their persecutors, its woody stems, clothed with smooth, narrow, spine-tipped leaves, spreading their shielding strength, and offering a stout resistance against all attempts to penetrate within them, while its powerful odour is said to defeat even the dog's keen scent. When men at Childermas heard in the day's Gospel of the Flight from Bethlehem and sang the offertory of the escape 'from the snare of the hunter,' they learnt to prize the presence about their altars and homesteads of the bush that had protected the Sacred Child, and in southern lands, where they still cling to the old traditions of the days when the Son of God was on this earth, it is the Juniper that is sought at every feast to deck their homes, but especially at the season which recalls His coming as the little Child whose infancy it had helped to shelter. In the ancient Church of the land of Egypt, whither the Saviour was hastening, the gum of the Juniper-tree is one of the four sorts they allow to be used for incense to be burnt in His honour, and the reason they give is that

this is a 'pure' tree, which leaves no cinders in the fire, nor has it ever rendered its perfume in the service of idols, dæmons, or magic.

There are other trees that have also been connected with the privilege of giving their shade to the Holy Family on this occasion. The Hazel (*Corylus*), which is indigenous to Palestine, is especially so marked, and its catkins, often known as Palm, come very early in the year about the day assigned to commemorate the Fuga or Deductio Christi in Aegyptum. Mr. Conway says that in Bavaria the Witch Elm (*Ulmus montana*) is also spoken of in reference to this same period, and we think that it has been somewhere mentioned as a tree frequently to be found upon the site of old religious houses in England; so, too, the drooping branches of the Weeping Willow (*Salix Babylonica*) have had a similar association allied with them. Along the sea-coasts of the Levant the Rose-Mary (*Rosmarinus*) grows in great luxuriance, and in Andalusia they say it was one of those shrubs that made a covert for the Mother and Child on their way. We have already stated how upon its branches the Saviour's baby-clothes were said to have been stretched to dry, and that from thence comes its fragrance and name of Arbor Mariae, and how, about Holy week, it puts forth little purple blossoms in sympathy with Him to whom it had ministered as a little Child.

In many old representations of the Flight into the land of Egypt, a wheatfield is to be seen in the background, or alluded to by some detail, in reference to the very popular story of a miracle worked through the presence of the Son of God which saved the little company from the cruelty of Herod. The legend is that 'When it was discovered that the Holy Family had fled from Bethlehem, Herod sent his officers in pursuit of them. And it happened that when the Holy Family had travelled some distance they came to a field where a man was sowing wheat, and the Blessed Virgin said to

the husbandman, "If any shall ask you whether we have passed this way ye shall say, Such persons passed when I was sowing this corn." And behold a miracle! For by the power of the Infant Saviour in the space of a single night the seed sprang up into stalk, blade, and ear, fit for the sickle. And next morning the officers of Herod came up and inquired of the husbandman saying, "Have you seen an old man with a woman and Child travelling this way?" And the man who was reaping his wheat, in great wonder and adoration replied, "Yes." And they asked him, "How long since?" And he answered, "When I was sowing this wheat." Then they turned back from the pursuit.'

Lusatian Wends tell it a little differently, for they say that the Holy Mother said to the peasant, 'God be with thee, my good man! As soon as thou hast sown take thy sickle and reap.' And no sooner had he finished scattering the seed at one end of the field than it was ripened at the other. In answer, therefore, to the soldiers' inquiries as to the time when he had seen the wayfarers, he replied, 'Not long ago; just when I was a-sowing this wheat.' 'You idiot!' they exclaimed, 'why, that must have been twelve weeks ago,' and they turned away in disgust, being hopeless of overtaking the fugitives.

This is a very frequently depicted subject in scenes referring to the exodus from Judæa, and may be remembered as forming a portion of Die Sieben Freuden Maria, by Hans Memling in the Munich Gallery, a picture often reproduced, or in the beautiful fresco at St. Onofrio's, Rome, by Pinturicchio.

The Magyars say that every corn of wheat, if split, will be seen to bear the impress of the Madonna and Child, but perhaps this is not an outcome of this legend, since in Sclavonic eyes all corn is regarded as a holy thing, and known familiarly as 'God's Gift.' We have,

however, names for certain species that seem especially allied to this legend of the wheat-field.

The many-eared Wheat (*Triticum turgidum*, etc.) is known in Italy as Grano d'Egitto, in Sicily as Spica di la Madonna or Spica di lu Signuri Deu, and in France as Blé de Miracle, while the *dicoccum* species called in France Blé de Jérusalem, and in the Bernese Oberland Jerusalemskorn, may have the same reference.

Another folk-tale connected with the Flight into Egypt is heard in Italy respecting a field of Vetches, and is told in Miss R. H. Busk's most interesting 'Folklore of Rome,' as follows: 'One day the Madonna was carrying the Bambino through a lupin-field, and the stalks of the lupins rustled so that she thought it was a robber coming to kill the Santo Bambino. She turned and sent a malediction over the lupin-field, and immediately the lupins all withered away and fell flat and dry upon the ground, so that she could see there was no one hidden there. When she saw there was no one there she sent a benediction over the lupin-field, and the lupins all stood up straight again, fair and flourishing, and with tenfold greater produce than they had at first.' It may be that the Sweet-leaved Milk Vetch (*Astragalus Clusij*) may have been in the mind of the reciters of this story, for in Spain we still hear of it as Yerba de Santa Maria.

In the Wälsch Tirol they say that the Stone Bramble (*Rubus saxatilis*) now creeps the earth but once was an upright bush, for that shame has dwarfed its race since the time of the journey into Egypt, when, instead of aiding its Creator, it impeded His way by tearing the eastern veil from the head of the Holy Virgin, and in northern lands this is still recalled by its name in Denmark and Sweden of Jungfru Mariä bär, or the Virgin Mary's Berry.

Along this weary journey we might place many a plant which speaks by its ancient dedication of Mary's footprints,

tears, or rest, and these would come quite as appropriately here as in a proposed volume containing her own Flora. There are some, moreover, that seem especially to belong to this place. It was said that wherever the Holy Family stayed that there the Jericho-roses (*Anastatica*) of the desert opened and flowered, just as they did upon the Holy Night at Bethlehem, while the sweet Honeysuckles (*Lonicera*) that grow luxuriantly in Palestine, and are allied with these in name, may actually have often overshadowed the divine Child; the contracting petals of these deliciously scented shrubs recalled those of the true Jericho-rose, and thus have the name still in Germany of Lilien or Rosen von Jericho. The pretty Ground Ivy (*Nepeta glechoma*) whose patches of perfumed, heart-shaped leaves are found among the herbage of our shadowed ways, were once thought to mark 'Que Dieu marcha,' where God has walked, as the plant is called in Les Heures d'Anne de Bretagne, and its title in northern Italy of Erba della Madonna, unites with it both Mother and Son. The Speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), whose English sound is a very benediction, and which in our Devonshire lanes they still call God's Eyes or Angel's Eyes, has in the Zillerthal the pretty dedication of Unser lieben Frauen Rast, or Our dear Lady's Resting-place, while in connection with the hurrying along another Via Dolorosa, it is also known as Christ's Sweat. Many of the Saxifrages which carpet the earth with their close-growing pile, and of some of which we have spoken under the 'Circumcision' as bearing the tremendous title of Jehovah-blümchen, are known in Germany and England as Our Lady's Cushion; our poetic name of Traveller's Ease for the silvery Potentilla, in Spain marks the 'Footsteps of Christ,' and in many lands the 'Hand of Mary,' and would make us wishful that those titles had been gained from being among the herbs along their way. We have no right to include the Wayfaring Man's Tree

(*Viburnum lantana*), another charming English designation, that seems to come to the mind as suitable in this place; nor the Chaste Tree (*Vitex Agnus Castus*), except from its use in the metaphor by St. Francis, who in his book entitled 'The Love of God' (ix. 4) says, 'If travellers who carry a branch of the "Agnus Castus" are refreshed and rested, what refreshment this glorious Mother must have received from carrying the Immaculate Lamb of God.' The Chaste Tree, which is known in Egypt and Arabia as Kaf Miriam or Mary's Hand, and by Easterns and Europeans as Abraham's Tree, is a species of Willow, whose aromatic perfume scents the Jordan's banks, and to whose branches was attributed the virtue of combating weariness and assuaging the passions. Eastern monks are wont to make themselves girdles of it, and when going a journey to carry a small portion in their hands. One more plant we can scarcely omit from this enumeration, for the beds of Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) once in fancy told to Christian eyes where the great Mother had gone, not alone but hand in hand with her greater Son; and so in France, when they saw its beauteous banks of gold, they regarded it as the mark of Le Pied de Bon Dieu, or in Germany of Herr Gotts Schüh. In every part of Europe it was also known as springing forth at the touch of Our Lady's Shoe or Slipper, and in Dorsetshire they spoke of it as (Our) Lady's Cushion. The same union of names is found also in the lovely wild European orchid *Cypripedium calceolus*, and there are many other plants which the artist would be entirely justified to employ in scenes of the Flight into Egypt or the Repose there, but which we need not further suggest.

THE REPOSE IN EGYPT

Ficus Sycamorus.
Balsamo-dendron Opobalsamum.
Phoenix dactylifera.

THE REPOSE IN EGYPT

THERE are several places in Egypt that are treasured in the traditions of the ancient Church of St. Mark as having been visited by the Holy Family. The most celebrated of these are the Garden of Balsam at Matariyeh, near On or Heliopolis; the Grotto of Old Cairo or Babylon; Birk, near Manfalût; and Baisous, near Behnesa. The first important large town at which the holy wayfarers would arrive would be that which was also the chief city of the province, viz. Heliopolis. Modern Cairo had not then been built, and Old Cairo was the Roman fortress-town of Babylon. Arriving at Heliopolis, it is said that the weary travellers went from door to door through the streets of that world-renowned centre of old Egyptian learning begging for some food and water; being everywhere repulsed, they passed out of the southern gate that still is to be seen, and sank down worn, travel-stained, and exhausted beneath the shade of a Sycamore-fig that grew in a garden at Matariyeh. As hunger kills in the West, so does thirst in the East, but like to Hagar of old in the Arabian desert, so now to Mary did God reveal a spring to satisfy their need. Some say that this fountain burst forth at the prayer of the Mother or the bidding of her Child, while others assert that it had previously existed, but that like every other well in this land it was brackish, being supplied by infiltrations from the Nile; now, however, it became, as it still continues, the one and solitary pure, untainted spring in the whole of Egypt.

This Garden of Matariyeh, which is about six miles north of modern Cairo, and a furlong from the walls of the Biblical On and Greek Heliopolis, was a spot to which pilgrims from Eastern and Western Christendom were wont to flock in early and mediæval days, and thither the children of the venerable Church of St. Mark still resort, as one of the scenes in a portion of the early life of Jesus Christ. It is the origin of the *Réposos* of the mediæval artists, known to them from those early deutero-canonical gospels of the Infancy, popular legend, mystery-play, or carol song, and confirmed by pilgrims' writings or crusader's story.

Whether the Sycamore which we now find here known as the Virgin's Tree be the identical one that shaded the Holy Family is a matter of dispute; but it is not as a relic that we need to regard it, but as a monument marking a sacred spot. Still we understand that it is by no means unreasonable to suppose that the portion existing is a survival of the original; for it is only in name that it is like to what we know in England as a Sycamore. Ours in Europe is either a Maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), or else a Bead-tree (*Melia Azedarach*), but this is the True Sycamore or Pharaoh's Fig, indigenous to Egypt and Syria, with grainless, close, and incorruptible wood, of which those sarcophagi of Egypt were made with which our museums are now replete. Its leaves are like the Alder, and its great rounded head of sombre green foliage is a frequent and welcome sight in Lower Egypt. In summer and autumn it bears upon small leafless shoots a quantity of round flesh-coloured fruit, which the Arab eats while young, hastening its ripening by making a small incision near the eye. In flavour it is sweet, recalling the apple and strawberry, the skin thin, and the flesh white and watery like that of the Japanese Medlar; it will not keep but becomes sickly and unpleasant after a day or two. This especial

tree at Matariyeh is situated in an open space with a plantation about it of orange and other fruit-trees whose perfume scents the air; though leaning considerably to one side through the loss of the greater portion of its trunk, what remains is fairly sound, bears a fine crown of foliage, and the enormous roots, which appear to be of extreme antiquity, are protected by a wooden palisade. The Arab guardians permit no one to injure the bark or boughs, but allow the pilgrim to kneel beneath the branches and to recite his Pater and Ave. The great Egyptian traveller and student Burckhardt says, 'Since the Egyptian Sycamore, among various other trees, will live many thousand years, there is nothing absurd in the supposition that the Virgin may have sat with the Infant Saviour under the shade of this noble trunk' (Egypt and Nubia, i. 161). In 'Baedeker's Guide,' however, it is stated that this tree we now see was planted in 1672, but this must be entirely untrue, for Sandys in his 'Travels' visited it sixty years before that date, and describes it as we see it to-day; so, too, Thévenot in 1657, after telling how a portion of it had previously fallen, adds that the remainder was standing although 'fort vieux.' About the year 1750, a naturalist who was a friend and pupil of Linnæus, examined it and considered it to be several hundred years old, while still earlier the Protestant travellers Jean Wessling and Dr. Sepp in 1730 state their conviction that it was the same tree as was honoured in the second century. These authorities show the impossibility of the date given in the popular guide-book being correct, and seem to confirm the Coptic tradition as to its identity.

The enclosure within which are the Well and Tree of the Holy Family is known as the Garden of Balsam, and herein grew the shrub that yielded the precious balm so prized for its medicinal virtues and its fragrance. Some attribute its introduction to the time of the notorious Cleopatra, who is said to have sent a commission to obtain

a plant from Solomon's Garden of Engaddi; but to the early Christians its presence here was linked with Him from whom all virtue flows, and they loved to think that it sprang up on the spots in this garden moistened by His sweat or from the water wherein His blissful Mother laved His limbs or washed His robes. Even so great a commentator as Cornelius a Lapide (Ecclus. xxiv. 20, 21) seems to see in its coming here a few years before the Holy Family's arrival a striking figure and realisation of the words, 'I gave forth My odour like sweet Balsam . . . and My fragrance like pure myrrh'; and the ancient traditions of the shrub we may find conveyed across Europe in connection with the Libanotis, Frankincense, or Rose-Mary, and also in the *Tanacetum Balsamita*, known as the Balm of Mary, Cost-Mary, Oculus Christi, or Mary's Myrrh.

Since 1615, when the last shrub in this garden was destroyed by a flood of the Nile's waters, not a single plant of this historic Balsam (*Balsamo-dendron Opobalsamum*, Kunth.) has been known to come to Europe. From the earliest times it had been deemed so precious, that the Pharaohs of Egypt made expeditions into Central Africa to obtain it; and upon the walls of the lovely temple enclosure of Deir el Bahari on the plain of Thebes we may see this tree being borne in tubs slung on poles between Nubian slaves on the return from the sacred land of Phut or Phunt. Josephus tells us that according to Jewish tradition the first plant of it in Judæa was a regal gift made by the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon, and this is exceedingly probable; for it is still said to be found in the Sûdan, and possibly in Abyssinia, whose kings claim descent from that Queen's son. It is to be hoped that now that this portion of the world is being opened to travellers, that we shall once again be able to see this famous shrub which for nearly three hundred years has been lost to botanists. Once its

tonic and stomachic properties and the rareness of it made popular imagination extend its virtues until it seemed to satisfy that search of Eastern pharmacy, the elixir of life itself. Pliny boasted of its possession by the Roman conquest of Judæa, and says, 'Of all perfumes, the best is that of the balm produced by the land of Judæa alone. Formerly it only grew in two gardens [*i.e.* Solomon's Hortus Conclusus among the mountains of Bethlehem-Judah and at Engaddi, west of the Dead Sea], both of them royal. The Emperors Vespasian and Titus have exhibited the shrub in Rome. Glorious to say, since Pompey the Great we have carried trees even in our triumphs. Now this tree is a captive, and pays tribute with its nation' (Hist. Nat. xii. 25, 54).

There evidently was a balm or Balsam growing in Gilead in the days of the patriarch Jacob, but its gum was probably of an inferior quality to that of Central Africa; it was most likely the Balsamo-dendron Gileadensis, *Kunth.*, of which we have a plant at Kew, and it is to this that the prophet Jeremias refers when in writing his Lamentations in the city of Heliopolis near this Matariyeh garden, he exclaims, 'Is there no balm in Gilead, no physician there?' And he exhorts the Jewish nation which was flocking back into Egypt to return again and to 'go up into Gilead, and take of its Balsam, O virgin, thou daughter of Egypt; for in vain shalt thou use many medicines, since no cure shall be unto thee here' (xlvi. 11).

Both in title and pre-eminence of virtue the Balsam is so distinctively allied in Christian lore with our Blessed Lord, that it is to be regretted that the knowledge of this shrub has been lost, and its history so dwindled out of memory as to be extinct. The tradition of its having been in this Garden of the Repose, of its having shed its fragrance about the Holy Child, shaded His walks, and been touched by His hand, might well have made it valued by earnest

Christian folk; it was with this reverence for it that once its gum was that employed by the Church as a component in the sacred chrism to be the balm upon the brow of anointed priest and king as well as on that of the little baptized child, and for which the Balsam of Peru is now used as a substitute. The venerable Coptic Church of Egypt once erected a chapel within this enclosure, and its foundations are still beneath the surface, and every year they gather here and still keep the Feast of Balsam, to revive the memory of the early years of their Saviour's life in this land.

Upon leaving the Garden of Matariyeh and moving on from their first resting-place, the Holy Family came to the fortified Roman town of Babylon, now known as Old Cairo; and beneath one of the many interesting churches that have clustered about it is shown the grotto wherein the exiles dwelt. An old crusading bishop of Acre in 1244 says that 'at Cairo is a very ancient Date-tree, which spontaneously bent itself to the Blessed Virgin when she wished to eat of its fruit;' and it is told in the early writing called 'The History of the Nativity and Infancy' how the Holy Family 'sat beneath a Palm which bent its branches to give them its fruit, whereupon Our Lord blessed it and said it should be one of the trees of Paradise, and called it the Palm of Victory' (Cairo = victory). Every date-stone bears upon it a small circle as a sigil of this gracious ministry of its fruit, which some say was the first word of exclamation in surprise uttered by the Virgin Mother. In very early art this legend of the Palm-tree is of frequent occurrence, as is also the similar story of the Cherry-tree, but this latter is usually connected with the Visitation or some other period.

As far as we are aware, there has been no collection made of the traditions recorded at various places up the Nile's flood of the Holy Family's wanderings, but they are heard at such

spots as the monastery of Deir Baisous or Bai-Jesus, *i.e.* the Home or House of Jesus, situated to the east of Behnesa, the ancient Oxrynchus, near which the discovery of MSS. was recently made, and of which 'The Words of Jesus' have been published. At this place they tell how three trees were once growing there which had sprung from twigs put in the ground by Our Lord when a little boy, and to this an ancient Bishop Cyriacus refers in one of his sermons that has been preserved relating to the Flight (Bibl. Patr. Cod. Arab. 143) and of which Silvestre de Sacy in his Letters to Birch gives a description. So also at Birket or Birk, a village near Manfalût, the Copts keep a festival on our 20th of May in honour of Our Lord having come to them upon that day; and they say that an old Olive-tree in their village sprang from a staff of that wood used by St. Joseph, which was driven into the earth by the Divine Child. Many other instances, no doubt, exist of this folk-lore relating to their stay on the Nile's banks; and remains of it are to be found treasured in the changeless life of its people, ready to be garnered whenever we will take as great an interest in the Christian antiquities of the Holy Land of Egypt as we at present do in those of pre-Christian time.

It is grateful to be able to leave our Blessed Lord and His Mother in the Land of the Repose, and to reflect that the early boyhood of the Child of Bethlehem was spent under the enchanting sunlight and in the exhilarating air of Egypt.

It is the tradition that the Blessed Virgin earned her living by weaving linen, and St. Joseph by his trade as carpenter and builder, and no doubt they would have to move on from place to place in order to secure fresh work. It was thus early that the Holy Child had, as it were, to begin His apostolic wanderings, and to be about His Father's business. And just as the Copts love to think that wherever He went Nature recognised His presence, the trees bowing

their heads, and the herbs giving forth their incense, so in truth did these deserts of yellow sand along this rich Nile valley up which He passed become mystical paradises, blossoming in luxuriant abundance with lives of sanctity and self-denial. It has been said that the religion He came to found, like Himself, though born in Judæa, was nurtured in Egypt, and it is pleasant to reflect that this interesting land was the first to rapturously enrol itself under the banner of His Cross. Few now ever think of this among the many hundreds who yearly visit Egypt, and the modern ease and comfort of access and existence there have banished from our memories the lessons it once recalled of God Incarnate and His saints. To-day we can drive to the very gate of the Garden of Balsam and Mount of Myrrh from our luxurious hotel, with nought to disturb our ease save it be the dust of our carriage wheels, and stand upon spots that saints and kings once ardently desired to see, and yet could not see them, and which were denied to the earnest hearts of thousands of crusading knights and nobles. Think of this, however, you who drive along that road, that Christendom in the purest days of its chivalry, in the most earnest of its faith, and the most refined in its art, in days whose thoughts have become the wisdom, as a great author has said, of succeeding generations, that here it gathered the noblest of its sons in intellect, sanctity, position, and wealth, ready and happy to die for the Child who played beneath the Sycamore's shade of Matariyeh.

CONCLUSION

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HERE, then, we conclude our Flora of the Nativity and Infancy of our Lord; but it is not only as curious old-world lore that we gather this store, suggestive to artist and poet, but with the hope that it may be helpful in renewing and promulgating that intelligent interest in Nature which is the parent of so much that is good. To transport oneself away from to-day's lack of higher ideals and artistic imaginings into those of the moyen age is like passing from the noisy, hot, and bustling street, with its fevered rush, into the peace and pleasant shade of some cloistered garth; the mental contrast is that between the vulgar, animal life of the moiling crowd and the cultured, refined life of some collegiate home. It all seems so far away from us now that a return of its peace of mind and healthy country life appears impossible, while the telling of its pious thought reads like a poetic dream. The old habits of life and the customs they originated were first weakened by being changed or being branded as superstitious, and as their significance faded out of prominence they became lifeless and unreal. Previously everything had its *raison d'être*; for each observance there was an explanation, for each flower and herb employed at their festivities there was an interpretation, but, deprived of this, customs became empty pomanders. Their fragrance is still to be revived if we would make life as sincere and as mirthful as our forefathers did, and learn the spirit of their joy and the foundation of their faith. To many persons a sensibility for Nature is most keen and penetrating; and even with those to whom art and literature do not appeal, a lesson from the

flowers may often be found to arouse constant delight and appreciation. For such here is a book open to all, and here is the first writing to be read therein consecrated by the use of the centuries past. A flower is often of deeper significance than mere words, speaks 'where words become silent, and gains when words lose in meaning.' Just as the Church fills all her windows and vacant spaces with pictured glass, statuary, and painting, so that the eyes of priest and people may dwell on no profane object within her walls, affording a lesson to the ignorant and an exhortation to all, so we may see in the Christian Flora how she made all Nature speak to the listening heart, and how her faithful children have loved to wed the trees and shrubs with sacred and wholesome lore, so that the mind was distracted from vanity and weariness, and familiar things were interwoven with associations to interest them mentally and assist them spiritually. As year by year we allow our national life to become more hurried and harried, and our ambitions to be more sordid and ungainly, we shall get driven away further and further from all possibilities of a reposeful temperature of mind and appreciation of the joy of living, while the recalling to memory of the quiet thought and happy method of life of olden days will become more visionary and impossible. Truly the 'world hath lost its youth, and the days begin to ware old,' and we seem to be resolutely casting from us the habits and beliefs that made childhood happy and youth and manhood noble. Yet many among us must crave for something of the poetry of the old thought and the piety of its ways. Shall we not make some effort, at least at the Nativity-tyde, to become once again as little children in their simplicity, and enter into the joy of that Kingdom of Heaven which pious hearts have opened to us as they contemplated earth's meadow-sweet fields in their pilgrimage from things temporal to those eternal?

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